

Can God's Existence and Natural Law Morality Be Proven by Human Reason Alone?

A Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics and Fideism, as Argued for by the Worldwide Church of God

By Eric V. Snow

Why should we Christians believe that God exists to begin with? Why should we accept the Bible as the infallible word of God in the original autograph (first manuscripts)? Why should we believe that God created us, instead of believing we humans are the product of spontaneous generation¹, random mutations, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest? In short, WHY should we be Christians at all? This question can be answered in two basic ways: 1. By faith--blind faith--alone. 2. By using human reason to support the tenets, preambles, or articles of faith. Today, the traditional Christian theologian who best exemplifies the former approach is the Dane, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55), while the latter is found most classically in Thomas Aquinas (1224?-1274), the "Angelic Doctor" of Roman Catholicism in the five ways he attempted to prove God's existence in Summa Theologica. The former approach is known as fideism, the belief that the existence of God (or the truth of the Bible) can ONLY be accepted by faith ALONE. The creed of fideism was best stated in an extreme form by the early Catholic church writer, Tertullian (155?-230?): "I believe because it is absurd."² The opposite view, which could be called evidentialism, was dogmatically stated as Roman Catholicism's official doctrine at the Vatican I Council in 1870: "If any one say that it is not possible, by the natural light of human reason, to acquire a certain knowledge of The One and True God, let him be anathema."³ Hence, given our belief in Christianity, we can take two highly contrasting approaches to justifying our belief in it.

"Racism is immoral in all places at all times." Skeptical liberals typically claim to be cultural and moral relativists who are certain of nothing. But can they deny that statement? Likewise, feminism is a system of moral absolutes: Chinese

1 Spontaneous generation is the alleged process by which the first single living cell came to exist, by random chance. Often scientists holding to this view assert that the first cell was an accident caused by various proteins and amino acids floating in the ocean suddenly being struck by lightning.

2 As quoted in Norman L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 47.

3 As quoted in Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1918 (original publication), p. 104.

foot-binding, female genital mutilation, and India's suttee are immoral in all places at all times, regardless of the "rich heritage" or "long tradition" of any tribal culture or civilization to the contrary otherwise. This argument against moral relativism implicitly upholds natural law theory, which says certain basic moral absolutes can be discovered by human reason alone, without the use of revelation from God (i.e., the Bible). But does it take a fundamentally mistaken approach to dealing with skeptics and unbelievers? Presuppositionalism, which is a theological school of Christian apologetics (defense of the Christian faith) that a number of Calvinist theologians uphold, maintains that human reason shouldn't be used to prove natural law morality or God's existence. This brief essay argues that God's existence and natural law can be proven by human reason alone and that presuppositionalist apologetics uses a fundamentally flawed approach to defending the Christian faith.

Now pointing out that even liberals believe in moral absolutes is easy: That is, at some level, everyone believes in basic minimum standards to human behavior. But now this is much more difficult: How can we derive "Thou shalt not murder" from matter in motion? C.S. Lewis, James Q. Wilson, and Ayn Rand all have different philosophical approaches to achieve this goal. So theoretically, could God have just arbitrarily inverted various moral commandments? Could God have made adultery moral and avoiding it immoral? Thomas Aquinas upheld belief in a natural law that ultimately goes back to God as the Creator of nature.

By contrast, presuppositionalist apologetics denies that human reason can discover moral absolutes while examining human society's operations, the relationships among people, and man's relationship to the natural world. It also denies that God's existence can be proven. In contrast, here an evidentialist approach to apologetics will be upheld. Despite the presently defective state of man's mind, certain basic laws can be derived to establish a common ground between believers and unbelievers in our presently pluralistic, general secular public square. We have to witness to them using arguments derived from nature that don't immediately reveal God as the Creator of nature. Then, later on, we can reason back to the Creator as the cause of it, if the unbelievers listen to and later (most unlikely) accept what we know from revelation/the Bible. Hence, a Christian uses the arguments of intelligent design with intelligent, informed skeptics who believe in evolution. Then, if they are still granting the Christian a hearing, he or she moves on to the historical and archeological evidence favoring the inspiration of the Bible (such as fulfilled prophecy) as opposed to any other alleged holy book. Of course, the unbelievers' rejection of Christianity may be for any number of emotional or psychological reasons instead, such as the desire to have a sex life without any moral rules beyond a prohibition on using force (i.e., "between consenting adults.") But it's still a way to leave them "without excuse," as per Romans 1:20.

DID THE FALL DAMAGE MAN'S MIND?

How badly did the Fall damage man's mind? Classical Calvinist theory believes man's reason, and the general functioning of his mind, has become seriously and permanently disordered by what they call the noetic consequences of sin. But this teaching, as well as the doctrine of complete moral depravity, are both mistaken. Otherwise people could start plausibly reasoning they aren't responsible for their moral decisions in life, much like someone judged insane or mentally incompetent when on trial. It's obvious from the world today and its past history that human nature is terribly corrupt and evil. But as corrupt as man's mind is, as witnessed by Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-18, we shouldn't infer total depravity or the complete destruction of the reliability of man's mind due to the noetic consequences of sin from these texts. There has to be some level of moral competence when reasoning on what witness nature and the relationships within human society give to thinking minds. An explicit Biblical witness for natural law theory appears in Romans 2:14-16: "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them." Such a text shows the all-encompassing view concerning the noetic consequences of sin in damaging the human mind/heart and/or the doctrine of total depravity are not correct. People mired in a sinful lifestyle still can choose to do better or worse morally in the circumstances they are in, even when they are uncalled to salvation presently. For example, there are people who give up being alcoholics who aren't true Christians through the Alcoholics Anonymous program. Even the sense of "Enlightenment" that supposedly comes in a pantheistic religion's tradition, such as Buddha's relative to when he was of royalty and when he had been so stringently ascetic he was torturing his body, can involve a movement from greater error to lesser error, even though it doesn't save them for eternal life spiritually.

EVERYONE ULTIMATELY BELIEVES IN MORAL ABSOLUTES

Similarly, consider C.S. Lewis' at times witty comments that everyone in all cultures believes in a set of moral absolutes; they just disagree concerning their extent and application ("Mere Christianity," p. 19): "There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference. If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, and Romans, what will strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own. . . . for our present purpose I need only ask the reader to think what a totally different morality would mean. Think of a county where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of doublecrossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a

country where two and two made five. Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to--whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agree that you ought not to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired. Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agree that you must not simply have any woman you liked. But the most remarkable thing is this. Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining "It's not fair" before you can say Jack Robinson."

So a Christian can initially build from this (effectively) irreducible primary, this moral sense everyone believes in when backed up against the wall and cross-examined, to erect a crude set of basic minimums for running a secular society. Then, if skeptical people are still open-minded, still listening to the gospel, a Christian can go on to make the rational case for believing that God exists and then that Creator has revealed Himself and His will for humanity's actions in a particular holy book, the Bible. If they won't listen, people at least have some moral basics to use as social glue for the time being for secular law-making purposes before Jesus returns. The utilitarian principle, "the greatest good for the great number," the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's "categorical imperative," and the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would wish them to do to you," which the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 b.c.) also proclaimed separately long before Jesus (Matt. 7:12) did, are good examples of secular moral principles that can help hold a society together socially. In practical terms, a Christian builds upon the secular liberals' own set of self-admitted moral absolutes, such as "racism is immoral in all places and all times." A Christian could then ask: "Well, now that you've admitted that you think moral relativism is false, could it not be theoretically possible that adultery is immoral in all places and at all times? How do you know for certain otherwise?" This line of reasoning then leads to the Christian having to explain why nature's existence and complexity proves there is a Creator, and why it's reasonable to accept in faith that the Bible is His word rather than (say) the Quran.

CAN A MORAL RELATIVIST CONDEMN GOD FOR ALLOWING EVIL?

Now when most atheists and agnostics complain about the problem of evil, a fundamental contradiction appears in their belief system: If you are a moral relativist, you can't complain about God's allowing bad things to happen to people, for you then you don't believe that "bad" even exists! You can't ask, "Why did God allow the Holocaust to occur?," thinking that line of reasoning successfully morally condemns God, if you don't believe genocide is immoral in all places at all times. So then, an atheist or agnostic has to believe in moral absolutes to morally condemn God. But one of the main, practical, psychological/emotional reasons for people becoming atheists and agnostics is

so that no one can tell them what to do, especially concerning their sex lives. For example, Aldous Huxley, the British atheist intellectual who wrote the novel "Brave New World," once admitted the motives behind why he and others rationalized to an skeptical position: "I have motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption . . . For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." Atheists have emotions and self-interested reasons too, and thus will rationalize their own position as justified.

Exception alert: The band of atheists sired by Ayn Rand, the strict Objectivists, apparently don't use the problem of evil against belief in God because they believe in a "benevolent universe" to which evil isn't fundamentally intrinsic and because they respect and value man's free will so much they won't complain about God's allowing man to have it. They are also, in their peculiar if limited way, passionate moral absolutists despite they reject the moral duty for self-sacrifice/altruism. But since most atheists/agnostics are moral relativists who frequently rail against God's allowance of evil, this fundamental contradiction in their intellectual position should be pointed out. (That is, unless and until they happen to reveal themselves to be fans of "The Fountainhead" and "Atlas Shrugged," then a Christian needs to use another approach!)

AYN RAND'S PHILOSOPHICAL CASE FOR MORAL ABSOLUTES

Ayn Rand's arguments for natural law theory, for deriving an "ought" from an "is," I think are unusually interesting. Her basic argument consists of noting that only living entities need values to live, that inanimate objects (like rocks, "matter in motion") don't need values. So then, man, as the "rational animal" (as per the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle's definition), needs certain particular values to live a rational and successful life, not just merely survive physically. Let's briefly quote her own reasonings in this regard (all emphasis hers): "An *ultimate* value is that final goal or end to which all lesser goals are the means--and it sets the standard by which all lesser goals are *evaluated*. An organism's life is its *standard of value*: that which furthers its life is the *good*, that which threatens it is the *evil*. Without an ultimate goal or end, there can be no lesser goals or means: a series of means going off into an infinite progression toward a nonexistent end is a metaphysical and epistemological impossibility. [Ironically, a similar denial of an infinite regress is fundamental to many classical arguments for God's existence!—EVS] It is only an ultimate goal, an *end in itself*, that makes the existence of values possible. Metaphysically, *life* is the only phenomenon that is an end in itself: a value gained and kept by a constant process of action. [Notice that here, from a Christian viewpoint, she starts

to jump the tracks. For Christians believe this physical life is not an end in itself, but training for a spiritual afterlife, and that God created this life for His own purposes rather than our self-chosen ones--EVS] Epistemologically, the concept of 'value' is genetically dependent upon and derived from the antecedent concept of 'life.' To speak of 'value' as apart from 'life' is worse than a contradiction. 'It is only the concept of 'Life' that makes the concept of 'Value' possible.' In answer to those philosophers who claim that no relation can be established between ultimate ends or values and the facts of reality, let me stress that the fact that living entities exist and function necessitates the existence of values and of an ultimate value which for any given living entity is its own life. [Notice how she slips in, at the base of her system, the case for attacking self-sacrifice--EVS]. Thus the validation of value judgments is to be achieved by reference to the facts of reality. The fact that a living entity *is*, determines what it *ought* to do. [Despite all her flaws in her general philosophical position, this is a particularly brilliant observation--EVS] So much for the issue of the relation between '*is*' and '*ought*.'" ("The Virtue of Selfishness," p. 17) It's true she didn't solve as much as this problem as she thinks here, for one could come back and argue about "side constraints," that is, why shouldn't men be parasites or aggressors against other men to get the values they need to survive. Nevertheless, her general argument for natural law theory deserves careful examination and consideration before being arbitrarily rejected. Her brief essay, "The Cult of Moral Grayness," is particularly striking when one realizes an almost fanatical atheist wrote it!

IF PRESUPPOSITIONALISM IS TRUE, WHY DO A FEW ATHEISTS OCCASIONALLY CAPITULATE?

If presuppositionalism is true, why does an occasional atheist or agnostic defect? The most interesting case as of late was Sir Anthony Flew, a famous philosophical atheist who converted to some kind of theism at the tail end of his life. Sir Fred Hoyle, the astronomer who conceived of the "Steady State" theory of the universe, the long-time rival view of its origins against the "Big Bang" theory, converted to some kind of pantheism based on his calculations about the unlikelihood that random chemical reactions would create life. The Intelligent Design theorists are making at least some agnostics and atheists in the academic world sweat: Perhaps these harshly anti-Christian, atheistic polemics by Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens are the secular intelligentsia's responses to this sense of unease, like "antibodies" sent in to attack the "virus" of theism. Examine carefully how the atheist or agnostic in question personally explains his own change of mind: Would he give an emotional or rational reason? If it's a rational one, would it be based upon an empirical argument for God's existence? So then, if we have an occasional atheist or agnostic who converts, what does that say about their presuppositions? Aren't then these people at least partially reachable, even when uncalled in this life? They don't automatically always rule out in advance empirical arguments for God's existence based on their own presuppositions or premises. So although they will hostile against considering

arguments for God's existence (re: Romans 8:7, perhaps the verse that Herbert W. Armstrong (HWA) cited the most often in his writings), the occasional one who breaks undermines the presuppositionalist position explained in this brief essay. Herbert W. Armstrong, in his "Autobiography," used the example of one Communist Party member who was successfully put on the defensive by him when using an interesting empirical argument for God's existence (that was like the English philosopher John Locke's I believe). One Communist, the local secretary of the Party, converted to the faith, based upon prophecies in Daniel being historically fulfilled, when HWA explained them during one evangelistic campaign in Oregon c. 1935.

PRESUPPOSITIONALISM CONFUSES MAN'S ULTIMATE METAPHYSICAL DEPENDENCE WITH HIS IMMEDIATE EPISTEMOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

Presuppositionalism has a certain level of truth to it, since there's no way for atheists to escape metaphysically the reality that God caused and created everything around us. But proving this to them by a readily verifiable means epistemologically is quite another story. (Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with how humans gain knowledge. It deals with the question, "How do you know that you know?" Metaphysics is the branch that deals with what fundamental types of being and entities exist in the universe and how they relate to each other. For example it deals with such questions as: Is there just one kind of "stuff" in the universe, monism," or are there two kinds of "stuff," dualism? Does God exist? Is the universe fundamentally orderly or chaotic? Do human beings have free will?)

There is common ground, not just a point of contact, between Christians and unbelievers. Let's use this analogy: Our natural moral knowledge is like the seen part of an iceberg. About 10% of floats above water's surface, 90% below. The 90% would be the much greater, more certain moral knowledge we have from supernatural revelation, from the Bible and from the Holy Spirit. The Christian and skeptic (of whatever other faith, including atheism) can agree on a good amount of the 10%. For example, both sides could agree that genocide is immoral in all places at all times, as part of this crude minimum. This moral foundation is based on the limited knowledge available by human reason alone that both sides can agree on by consensus. Then the Christian can defend the faith by working from the truths both sides hold in common (based on human reason and sense experience alone) to show the folly of atheism.

Now, it's true that the presuppositionalist position has a certain foundational truth to it concerning the implications of God's being the Creator. That is, all His handiwork reflects inescapably at some level His character and His power (cf. Genesis 1:26-27), even in its present generally damaged and fallen state before its restoration (Romans 8:19-21): "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected

to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." Therefore, ***if one reasons far enough back***, any attempt to deny God's existence ultimately boomerangs back at the denier, much like a metaphysical axiom. (An axiom is a philosophical statement that is so universally true that to deny it proves it. For example, the French philosopher Descartes' famous statement, "I think, therefore I am," is an axiom. Any total skeptic who doubts his own existence ironically proves it since he has to exist in order to have a mind that doubts!)

Nevertheless, perhaps the foundational mistake of presuppositionalism is its need to do so much reasoning beyond immediately verifiable statements, which undercuts its effectiveness to persuade unbelievers. It's indeed true that only the fool says there is no God (Ps. 14:1). But since we can't see God directly, like the sun during the daytime, proving that the atheist ultimately contradicts himself is a long, difficult, tedious process. Here presuppositionalism indeed ultimately becomes a giant version of begging the question, or reasoning in a circle: The atheist can evade being caught by that circle if we Christians choose to discard meeting him on commonly agreed epistemological ground (i.e., the basic reliability of human reason and sense experience, such as shown by the technological achievement that put men on the moon).

USING INITIALLY LIMITED KNOWLEDGE TO CATCH ATHEISTS IN AN ULTIMATE EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRAP

The atheist doesn't know in advance where the facts he knows may lead once the Christian points out their implications. For example, intelligent design theory does this by pitting the concept of irreducible complexity up against the theory of evolution's claim (in the gradualistic neo-Darwinist version) that each small step of development gives a living creature a selective advantage in its struggle to survive as part of a species. The atheist, at his starting point, isn't aware that (for example) scientific statements that he would assent to ultimately prove God's existence. The Christian's job, when defending the faith, is to show by inference, demonstration (like geometry's theorems), and dialog that what the atheist knows or believes contradicts his own belief system once the ultimate implications of those facts are known. The philosophical goal also is to show to atheists and agnostics that they are loading the dice metaphysically: They assume a priori (before experience) when interpreting all biological and other scientific facts that God didn't create nature. Therefore, having ruled out God in advance in the premises of all their arguments, they shouldn't be surprised that He can't possibly come out as a conclusion. The GIGO principle rules: Garbage in, garbage out. Hence, they end up "explaining" everything natural came to be via evolution with "just-so" stories that are little better than Greek and Roman myths. The basic response to them here should always be, "Nature cannot always explain nature." Why should God be

ruled out in advance a priori? Doesn't that rig the contest to benefit skeptics? "Science" shouldn't be defined in a way arbitrarily to exclude any possibility of the supernatural: When an evolutionist does this, he or she is engaged in philosophy, not science. Now, this version of evidentialist apologetics shouldn't be confused with getting any particular atheist or agnostic to believe in God and/or the Bible, for many will continue to reject God for emotional/psychological reasons. Furthermore, the spiritually uncalled are more likely to persist in unbelief than the called, for the Holy Spirit hasn't opened their minds to belief (John 6:44, 65). But the goal is to tear down at least the intellectual defenses that they erect to protect their unbelief, and put them on the defensive.

PRESUPPOSITIONALISM CONFUSES MAN'S METAPHYSICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

It's necessary to make a distinction between the ultimate ontological dependence of all humanity on God and the immediate sense experience and rational processes of any individual's mind. God is the ground of being (the "ens realissimum" for Kant), the ultimate reality, since He's the Creator and caused the universe to be created out of nothing by an act of will. As a subset of the created universe, the human mind has its origins in God's creative act, thus allowing us to be able to think at all. Therefore, any supposed "fact" that seems to conflict with that Truth (God as the Creator), such as the kinds of evidence cited to favor evolution, require some human being to be misinterpreting his or her sense experience. All correct interpretations of our sense experience lead back to God ultimately, directly or indirectly.

But it's another matter when discussing the truth with any given individual. He may deny God's existence or some truth about Him without knowing immediately the contradiction involved. To adequately deal with such people, we have to start with the minimal sense data they will affirm, their limited "circle of knowledge," and then reason outwards from it towards God's truth step-by-step to show their errors. (True, at any step on the way, they can emotionally reject going along, but let's leave that issue to the side presently). In this limited circle of knowledge, they may believe in the rational knowability of the universe for inadequate reasons and/or ones that take for granted the cultural inheritance they got from centuries of believing Christian scientists and scholars. But that's good enough for a Christian's initial apologetic purposes. Even the minimal amount that an atheist will affirm as being true metaphysically, even if the atheist is a skeptic, will lead to contradictions that can undermine their faith in skepticism and atheism. A Christian then starts by showing that atheists' denials of certain axioms (philosophical statements about fundamental realities) boomerang against them. For example, anyone denying the reality of the material world outside of their own minds (solipsism) has to use some fact drawn from the outside world to argue their case, which is self-refuting. Hence, if someone argues that everything he experiences may be a dream, he has to appeal to the

listener's belief in people falling asleep and having dreams to make his argument work. Ayn Rand called this the fallacy of the stolen concept: Someone argues against a position while covertly using some fact drawn from it. This is how many philosophers ironically have used human reason (which they assume to be reliable when making these arguments) to undercut human reason's reliability!

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF COMMON RELIGIOUS GROUND BETWEEN PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS

Because of this common ground, Paul could go up onto Mars Hill in Athens, mention the altar erected by pagans to the unknown God (Acts 17:23), and then say its God was the true God, the Creator. After citing the pagan poet who said (Acts 17:28-29), "For we are indeed his offspring," he then drew the conclusion, "Being God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man." He couldn't do this without admitting implicitly that this pagan poet's religious reasoning was valid. Paul here was doing some natural theology, much like how he reasoned that the creation witnesses to God's existence and eternal power (Romans 1:19-20). But presuppositionalism and natural theology are in intrinsic opposition. Ultimately presuppositionalism amounts to a type of fideism (the belief that God's existence should not be proven by believers, but only accepted in faith). By contrast, unlike what Thomas Aquinas (and Herbert W. Armstrong) believed, natural theology maintains God's existence (and some of His attributes) could be proven by human reason. The anthropic principle of intelligent design theory, for example, is a contemporary version of natural theology: If the physical universe's attributes and characteristics, as described by mathematical equations and variables, were every so slightly changed, humanity couldn't exist. Therefore, the world was designed specially for us, for we aren't the chance product of slime oozing over rocks for eons of time.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS SAY THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD INSTEAD OF THE QURAN?

We have to say why we believe the Bible is the inspired word of God instead of (say) the Quran. Any reason given (other than, "just because") involves giving some opinion or reason that the skeptic or infidel might consider. As R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley say (their emphasis, "Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics," p. 139): "This first point--that we know the Bible is the Word of God because it says so--has a glaring weakness as an argument. The argument would seem to take two forms. First the *Bible* is the Word of God because it, the Bible, says that it is the Word of God. Not *any* book that says it is the Word of God is the Word of God, but only this particular book. Suppose we ask, 'Why is that true only of this *book*'? [Again, consider the claims Muslims would advance on behalf of the Quran in this context--EVS].

One cannot simply answer, 'Because.' There must be some reason. But whatever reason is given is fatal to the [presuppositionalist's] case, because then one is not believing the Bible is the Word of God because it says so; but for some *other* reason. Suppose, second, that the argument is the general formula that *any religious* book that claims to be the Word of God must be so. Even that would be fatal for the specific case of the Bible. Even then, we would not be believing the Bible because *it* says it is the Word of God but because that is a characteristic of a certain class. That argument would be fatal for another reason. It would prove that there are many Words of God, all of them differing from, conflicting with, and contradicting one another. This would make God the author of confusion. So the notion that the Bible is the Word of God because it says so is simply not true. It would make no difference it is said so three million times--not merely three thousand--for such assertions do not prove what is asserted."

DOES THE RATIONALITY ASSUMPTION ABOUT THE UNIVERSE HAVE AN EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION?

The rationality assumption about the universe has a certain empirical basis to start with. I don't believe it's purely subjective, although it may be a matter of selective perception (i.e., is the glass half full or half empty?)

Otherwise, even primitive peoples wouldn't have perceived the cyclical aspects of nature, such as for planting and harvest, birth and death, winter and summer, day and night, etc. Furthermore, educated ancient Greeks influenced by Aristotle and certain other Greek philosophers at some level had to believe the universe was scientifically knowable. Here, of course, I'm asserting that the scientific method of induction (or generalization from sense experience) has relevance even when doing metaphysics, for I don't perceive myself that the universe is merely chaotic, especially the non-animate part! I'm not a Humean skeptic concerning regularities not proving the law of cause and effect, since I believe making an inference from observation to an object's essence is a sound procedure. (David Hume, the skeptical 18th century Scottish philosopher, famously claimed that seeing two billiard balls hit each other doesn't prove one actually causes the other to move, since "cause" has to be inferred into the observed event). But here Ayn Rand has a better argument: The law of cause and effect is merely the law of identity ("A is A," a thing is always itself, the most basic law of logic) over time: What a thing DOES is based on what it IS. Hence, the different effects from dropping a bowling bowl and a feather result because of the different essences, characteristics, and attributes of these two entities.

A Christian and an atheist can have a common meeting ground *epistemologically* at the starting point of a debate concerning the reliability of sense experience and inferences drawn from it, even though the atheist's foundation for the reliability of generalizations from his sense experience isn't fully sound *metaphysically*. That is, the atheist can have a weak

or inadequate reason for believing in the rationality assumption that excludes God metaphysically (or ontologically) as the cause of that natural order he asserts to exist. Of course, if instead the atheist or agnostic is an all-out skeptic (ala Hume or Feyerabend) who strongly denies the rationality assumption, then he's just signed over human reason to the Christian! I don't consider it coincidence that the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) attacked both the traditional proofs for God's existence and undermined the reliability of human reason concerning sense experience in "The Critique of Pure Reason." This makes his worldview the exact opposite of Thomas Aquinas: Instead of having both faith and reason, Kant had neither faith nor reason! (Admittedly, this is somewhat unfair to Kant).

FOUNDATIONAL FLAWS IN DESCARTES' RATIONALISM

Descartes' formula always had a key flaw in it, which is known as the "prior certainty of consciousness." The rival school, which Aristotle affirmed, maintained "the intentionality of consciousness." That is, to be conscious you automatically have to be aware of something outside of your own mind. Ayn Rand explained the philosophical reasoning behind this approach in "Atlas Shrugged" (p. 942): "If nothing exists, there can be no consciousness: a consciousness with nothing to be conscious of is a contradiction in terms. A consciousness conscious of nothing but itself is a contradiction in terms: before it could identify itself as consciousness, it had to be conscious of something. If that which you claim to perceive does not exist, what you possess is not consciousness." Hence, it's an axiom (a fundamental philosophical statement that when denied is proven) that consciousness can't have its awareness limited to just one's own mind.

The French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650), in his "Meditations," used the ontological argument for God's existence to show the sense data that his mind received was reliable. After all, he argued that theoretically a "malignant demon," which is really a stand-in for an all-powerful Satan, could be deceiving him about **all** he saw, heard, felt, tasted, and smelled, not just **some** of it. This argument for God's existence is bad, for it confuses "existence" as an idea with existence as an actual reality. But it goes like this (in Descartes' version, which isn't as clever as Anselm's original version): 1. All perfections are found in God. 2. Existence is a perfection. 3. Therefore, God exists. He also assumed that the perfect God would then never deceive him or allow his mind when working correctly to produce error: "Since it is impossible that he should will to deceive me, it is likewise certain that he has not given me a faculty that will ever lead me into error, provided I use it aright." (Descartes, "Meditations" in "The Rationalists," p. 145). Notice that he's conscious of the problem of evil and rejecting it when drawing this conclusion.

Descartes' method in "The Meditations", in which he reasons in a way that

descends into skepticism and doubt and then ascends back into faith and reason, does have value to it. To adequately deal with atheists and skeptics, a Christian has to start from their starting point in practical terms to lead them to see the contradictions in their worldview. To start from premises (or presuppositions) far outside their experience or purported knowledge immediately loses the battle to convert them rationally. It's necessary to use the old practical approach of effective public speaking (or rhetoric) which aims to persuade an audience which upholds a viewpoint opposed to the speaker's: First, the speaker tries to find some common starting point of mutual agreement before leading the listeners to consider what speaker believes in. It's much like Paul's differing approaches for dealing with gentiles differently from Jews, and aiming to be all things to all men when initially sharing the gospel with them (I Cor. 9:19-23). Presuppositionalism just tries to throw much too much at skeptics all at once from outside their circle of knowledge, which will result in total rejection nearly always. (This principle is also why Intelligent Design, as opposed to standard brand young earth model Scientific Creationism, is much more likely to get an initial hearing and some respectful consideration in academic circles). It's better to start out small, from the skeptical atheists' own more limited sense experience, and then move outwards towards God and the truth of the Bible that the Christian already knows is true, but the skeptical atheist denies. True, anyone uncalled won't convert fully to true Christianity (see John 6:44), but that's a largely separate issue.

Notice how such serious philosophy and theology has important practical consequences: For example, if you can't trust your senses, then any and all scientific and engineering work is folly from the get-go. We Americans tend to be ruthlessly pragmatic, and to dismiss such thinking as a waste of time. I beg to differ: True philosophy is practical, for it helps give you a paradigm or model for analyzing data correctly.

Now, let's turn to the specific case of the Worldwide Church of God. Even in the years before 1995, it began to change its teachings on Christian apologetics,⁴ not just merely on the nature of God or on the Old Testament's law's continuing moral validity for Christians. It must be realized that Pasadena's changes concerning fideism and evolution are a slowly moving but major philosophical and theological disaster, for they undermine the foundation of our beliefs rationally. For, after all, why argue about whether the Sabbath is still in force, if you aren't sure whether God exists to begin with! Or, if dealing with those who believe in another religion entirely, such as Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, why should any of them care about what the Bible says about God being two personal Beings (John 1:1) when they have no reason to believe in it

⁴ Christian apologetics attempts to defend belief in Christianity by using various arguments drawn from theology, philosophy, history, and science. It often attempts to prove the existence of God, the possibility of miracles, the historical reliability of the Bible, and the falsity of the theory of evolution.

to begin with? Hence, below, Pasadena's newfound views tending towards fideism and a more liberal view of evolution will be critiqued, while Herbert W. Armstrong's (HWA's) views shall be defended.

First, we should note HWA's diehard "Thomistic" views on the subject of Christian apologetics. He strongly stated that God's existence could be proven, as well as the Bible's inspiration:

But now I had, first of all, to prove or disprove the existence of God. It was no casual or superficial study. I continued in this research as if my life depended upon it--as, in actual fact, it did, as well as my marriage. I also studied books on the other side of the question. Suffice it to say here that I did find irrefutable proof of the existence of God the Creator--and I found proof positive of the fallacy of the evolutionary theory. . . . I had proved the reality of the great Majestic God! But my wife's challenge was still tormenting my mind. Already, in the evolutionary research, I had studied Genesis. I knew each of the world's religions had its own sacred writings. Once God's reality was proved, I had expected to continue in the pursuit of comparative religions to see if any such sacred writings proved authoritative. Through which of these--if any--did God speak to mankind? Since I had to research the Sabbath question anyway, and already I had delved into Genesis, I decided to continue my study in the Bible.⁵

Have you ever proved whether, as the book itself purports, it is the authoritative Word of the Creator God? Rather, have you not simply assumed, from what you have heard, read or been taught that it is either authentic, or else the religious writing of an small ancient Jewish race, groping in the darkness of human ignorance and of superstition, trying to develop a concept of God? . . . A world famous evangelist [Billy Graham?—EVS] has confessed publicly that he accepted the authority of the Bible without having seen it proved. Even though he had seen no real proof that the Bible is the authentic word of God, he had decided to accept it as such on sheer faith. But the Bible quotes God saying: "Prove me now herewith . . ." and again: "Prove all things." This evangelist apparently accepted the authority of the Bible because he had "accepted Christ" and at the same time blindly accepted what those humans who led him into the acceptance of Christ themselves accepted. Isn't it about time--and the point of rational wisdom, that you prove this important question once and for all? Because, if the Bible is in fact the inspired authentic Word of a living, all knowing, all powerful God, then your eternity will be judged by it.⁶

⁵ his emphasis, HWA, Mystery of the Ages (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985), pp. 21-22.

⁶ his emphasis, HWA, The Bible Superstition or Authority . . . and Can You Prove It (1985), pp.

Here I don't wish to imply HWA was infallible, and therefore these views of his must be accepted. But the tradition of the WCG in this area should be made clear, because in recent years the waters have been muddied by various fideistic statements, or by views that concede too much to evolutionists. This tradition may not have been entirely clear to the laity either--I distinctly remember running into two laymembers raised in the church, both highly intelligent, both of whom were attending college (one as a grad student) who have made similar fideistic statements. We should not think that having a sophisticated theology involves embracing fideism or weak views on the falsity of evolution. There are three very helpful books by traditional Christians on this subject which show equating naiveté with natural theology or a rationalistic defense of Christianity is unwise: R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, Classical Apologetics A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984); J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City A Defense of Christianity (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987) and John Warwick Montgomery, ed., Evidence for Faith Deciding the God Question (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991). With books such as these at our command, as well as the rationalistic Thomist tradition in the Roman Catholic Church, we should be able to see the wisdom and correctness of Mr. Armstrong's approach to Christian apologetics.

Alas! As in many other areas, Pasadena has been departing from HWA's position on these kinds of issues, and embarking upon theological error. There are a number of places where fideistic or more relaxed views on evolution manifest themselves: Paul Kroll, "Who Really Wrote the Bible," Plain Truth, October 1988, pp. 7-10; "Letters to the Editor," Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26; Kathy Johnson, "Footnotes--or Fakes," Good News, November-December 1990, p. 28; John Halford, "Religion and Science Bridging the Gap," Plain Truth, July 1993, pp. 14-20; Neil Earle, "Eyeing the Creation-Evolution Debate," Worldwide News, February 1, 1994, p. 4; John Halford, "Sabbath: The Days and Nights of Genesis," Worldwide News, February 1, 1994, p. 4; Neil Earle, "The Battle Over Genesis 1," Plain Truth, March 1994, pp. 20-23; Neil Earle, "The 'Monkey Trial' Retried," Plain Truth, July 1995, pp. 10-13; Keith W. Stump, "Digging Up the Bible," Plain Truth, July 1995, p. 23. Also, Dr. Herman Hoeh's "pre-Adamic men" theory will be investigated.

Paul Kroll and the person (Hernan Herrera?) who replied to the atheist/agnostic in the February 1989 Plain Truth were mistaken because they evidently weren't familiar with modern traditional Christian apologetics--at least outside of what Cornelius Van Til and company have written. For example, Pasadena has intoned:

1-2. All quotes that have emphasis in them are original to them, unless otherwise noted.

The writer [the agnostic/atheist] said something almost no defender of the Bible is willing to admit. His point is that it's not possible to "prove" the Bible's God-breathed authority to another person solely on the basis of rational argument. Something else must be in operation in the person's mind [i.e. the Holy Spirit as a result of being called--EVS].⁷

Actually, as Josh McDowell describes, all historical documents can be evaluated by three basic principles of historiography.⁸ The military historian C. Sanders called them the tests using bibliographical evidence, internal evidence, and external evidence.

The bibliographical test is based upon how many ancient manuscript copies of the document exist, and how many years between the first copy being written to the earliest manuscripts current existing. The Bible ranks very highly by this test, especially the New Testament. The latter has 24,633 known copies in manuscript form, including fragments, and portions of them survive from within a hundred years of its original composition. In contrast, only eight copies of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War exist, and 1,300 years exist between when it was first written, and the earliest copy of it still in existence. Tacitus' Annals were first written about 100 A.D., but the earliest copy presently existing is from about 1100 A.D., and only 20 or fewer manuscripts of it exist.⁹ Yet historians don't doubt the general accuracy of these works (unless they are heavily influence by post-modernism, in which case they doubt just about everything). As F.F. Bruce pointed out: ". . . [N]o classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because they earliest mss of their workers which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals."¹⁰ The same kind of secular reasoning can be used to support the Bible's reliability.

The internal evidence test involves checking how credible the written record is and to what extent it contradicts itself or engages in self-evident absurdities. One checks how close in time and geographical location the document was written to where the events it narrates occurred. Since the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or by people who recorded eyewitness

7 his emphasis, "Letters to the Editor," Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

8 Josh McDowell, More than a Carpenter (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), p. 47.

9 Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), pp. 39-43; McDowell, More than a Carpenter, p. 42; Robert A. Morey, The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1986), p. 115.

10 his emphasis, F.F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1960), pp. 16-17.

accounts, they have a high a priori¹¹ possibility of being correct. Also, since they were written in the lifetime of those who saw Jesus preach, hostile witnesses, such as the non-converted Jews, could have attacked harshly any inaccuracies in the Gospels. The non-Christian Jews knew Jesus had done miracles, so as a result Peter could make statements such as Acts 2:22: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know . . .” If Jesus hadn’t existed, or hadn’t done miracles, Peter wouldn’t have dared to appeal to the “common knowledge” of the Jews that Jesus did exist, and had done miracles. Hence, the internal evidence test yields powerful secular arguments for the reliability of the Bible.¹²

The external evidence test concerns whether other historical documents or archeological discoveries agree with the document you are presently examining for its reliability. Here, the higher critics have suffered repeated reverses throughout the twentieth century, and especially so since the end of the Second World War. For instance, skeptics have doubted the existence of the Assyrian king, Sargon, the last Babylonian king (according to Daniel), Belshazzar, and even Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea. Archeological discoveries have decisively refuted such views. Likewise, some said the village of Nazareth didn’t exist--up until the Nazareth stone was unearthed.¹³ As for archeology’s support for the Bible, the Jewish archeologist Nelson Glueck was willing to say: “It may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.”¹⁴ John Warwick Montgomery acknowledged the major area where the Bible and archeology may seem to conflict:

[American] Institute [of Holy Land Studies] researcher Thomas Drobenia cautioned that where archeology and the Bible seem to be in tension, the issue is almost always dating, the most shaky area in current archeology and the one at which scientific A PRIORI and circular reasoning often replace solid empirical analysis.¹⁵

Hence, the Bible has shown itself to be remarkably historically accurate, which again is an assertion backed by human reasoning using the external evidence test.

Fulfilled prophecy could also be called an “external evidence” of the Bible’s inspiration. The Bible’s prophets have repeatedly seen their predictions

11 That is, ahead of the facts (before further investigation).

12 McDowell, More than a Carpenter, pp. 49-54.

13 Morey, The New Atheism, pp. 126-127; See also Life--How Did It Get Here” By Evolution or by Creation” (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1985), pp. 208-212.

14 As quoted in McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, p. 65.

15 emphasis in source, Ibid.

fulfilled. The destruction of Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22), Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24), Nineveh (Zeph. 2:13), and the Persian empire by the Greeks (Dan. 8:3-8, 20-22) were predicted long in advance. The destruction wrought against Tyre (to date) was also predicted long in advance (Eze. 26:3-4, 7-8, 12, 14, 21), although this prophecy is not yet totally fulfilled. These predictions often use much detail, yet are fulfilled to the letter, implying the writers had access to knowledge unobtainable humanly. Certainly, their reliability far exceeds that of the supermarket tabloids' psychics! Again, this argument for the Bible's reliability just doesn't blindly accept its claim to be God's word, but constitutes external evidence for its inspiration and reliability.¹⁶

Now, the writer of the Plain Truth's reply to the agnostic or atheist mentioned above implies that only those who are called and obey what the Bible says can prove it is God's Word: "His point is that it's not possible to "prove" the Bible's God-breathed authority to another person solely on the basis of rational or scientific argument. Something else must be in operation in the person's mind. . . . However, the Bible shows that being able to "do what it says" in the true spiritual intent is dependent on God's calling and on his spiritual power . . ." ¹⁷ Mr. Kroll said in the article cited above: "How can we possibly prove whether the Bible is the inspired Word of this God? . . . The biblical formula for proving the truth of the Bible is simply to do what God says. . . . One "proves" the Bible only by living it. There is no other way."¹⁸

Fortunately, this argument is incorrect. Many who became traditional Christians (who likely were never called by God based upon Acts 5:32 as applied to Sabbath-keeping) used to be atheists or agnostics. These traditional Christians were persuaded by the rational evidence for God's existence and/or the Bible's reliability before committing themselves to a Christian way of life personally. For example, Josh McDowell set out to refute Christianity based on history and philosophy--and came back a believer. Frank Morison, a journalist, set out to prove the resurrection of Jesus was a myth--but came back a believer after carefully investigating the actual historical facts concerning it in the New Testament.¹⁹ Sir William Ramsay, the famed archeologist, was an agnostic who totally distrusted the New Testament. Due to actual field excavations he oversaw, such as the discovery of the city of Lystra mentioned in the book of Acts, he became a believer.²⁰ Lew Wallace, who wrote Ben Hur, had been an agnostic and intended to portray Jesus as only a man in this novel, but after his run-in with the famed unbeliever Robert Ingersoll and further research, became a

16 See the section on fulfilled prophecy in Ibid., pp. 267-323.

17 Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

18 Kroll, , Plain Truth, October 1988, p. 10.

19 See the preface and the chapter "The Book that Refused to be Written" in Frank Morison, Who Moved the Stone (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 8-12.

20 Morey, The New Atheism, p. 128; Norman L. Geisler, Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 326.

believer, and so described Jesus as both God and man in this novel. C.S. Lewis had been an atheist for many years, but his “faith” had begun to crumble after having read George MacDonald, G.K. Chesterton, and various romantics. Then a key nail in the coffin of his unbelief was delivered thus:

But I hardly remember, for I had not long finished The Everlasting Man [by G.K. Chesterton which had made Christianity much more sensible to him] when something far more alarming happened to me. Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good. “Rum thing,” he went on. “All that stuff of Frazer’s [author of The Golden Bough] about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once.” To understand the shattering impact of it, you would need to know the man (who has certainly never since shown any interest in Christianity). If he, the cynic of cynics, the toughest of the toughs, were not--as I would still have put it—“safe,” where could I turn”²¹

All these cases by uncalled agnostics, atheists, etc. Choosing to become traditional Christian believers largely or entirely based on the rational evidence for Christianity shows these statements in the Plain Truth to be mistaken, for these people didn’t commit themselves to Christ and His lifestyle first, and then see belief in the Bible as rational. Understanding (of a basic sort) preceded obedience.

The writer for the Plain Truth in the letters section also said that:

The article [by Paul Kroll] pointed out that the Bible describes miraculous events, which defy natural laws. They are events that cannot be duplicated in the laboratory; they are events none of us have seen. There is no way to demonstrate scientifically that these events occurred. How much less that they were from the hand of God.²²

Paul Kroll made a similar point implicitly in his article:

You and I did not see Jesus rise from the dead. We never saw a highway-sized trench open up in the Red Sea except, perhaps at the cinema. None of us have gaped at a grotesquely withered hand and deformed arm being made like new. We haven’t seen

21 C.S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy The Shape of My Early Life (New York: Walker and Company, 1955), p. 330.

22 “Letters to the Editor,” Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

God face to face. How do we know Moses did? Or Abraham? Or Jeremiah? Or Peter? Or Paul? Why should we accept countless miraculous happenings recorded in the Bible?²³

Two philosophical mistakes are made in these passages. The first one is that scientific knowledge and historiographical knowledge are not distinguished. The statement “Napoleon lost the battles of Waterloo and Leipzig” is not a scientific fact. Nobody alive today observed either of these events, nor are they even reproducible, which are two key parts of evidence for any scientific theory’s or law’s validity. These battles occurred only once in history, and never will happen again, which is the nature of all historical events. By contrast, scientific theories deal with currently observable, reproducible events that can be predicted to occur in the future, such as rocks falling to the ground (as per the theory of gravitation). History deals with particulars normally, such as in biographies, while science deals with the general and the universal, not the particulars as such. I can go out right now and drop rocks to the ground to test the law of gravity, but I can’t go out and refight the battles Napoleon fought in 1814-15. What is past is in the past, and can’t be changed. Therefore, historians can’t be actual observers of events that occurred before their lifetimes. Instead, they rely on eyewitness or secondhand accounts of past events, and check on these primary documents’ reliability before using them to write monographs, textbooks, or other historical works. We can be as certain that Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. as of any law of science, even though nobody alive today witnessed that event. The events that occurred in the Bible can be proven to have happened by the same methods of historiography that we can prove Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States and the author of the Declaration of Independence. The Bible’s history and record of miracles, events, reigns, personalities, etc. Is not scientific--but nor is any history book “scientific” either. The epistemology²⁴ of science and historiography are quite different, and should not be confused.²⁵

The second philosophical mistake made in the quoted passages above is that they assume historical accounts are not historiographically provable. Here the ghost of the Scottish philosopher David Hume lurks. But so long as we avoid anti-supernaturalist presuppositions--which are rampant among historians today--and realize others do have such a priori biases, miracles should be as provable as any other witnessed events that occurred in history. We can use the three historiographical tests McDowell listed above, and apply them to the Bible’s eyewitness and/or recorded accounts of miracles to see if such accounts are

23 Paul Kroll, “Who Really Wrote the Bible,” Plain Truth, October 1988, p. 10.

24 Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies how men and women acquire knowledge, i.e. how we know that we know.

25 For more on the difference between historiographical knowledge and scientific knowledge, see Paul E. Little, Know Why You Believe (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), pp. 59-71.

believable. Since most historians assume ahead of time fundamentalist Christianity is false, that there is no God, and that all reports of miracles to be false in any historical document they encounter, even in one (such as the Bible) which has shown itself reliable otherwise. What we have to realize is that those who assume a priori there is no God and that the miraculous is impossible will then proceed to try to “explain” away or disbelieve any accounts or miracles they encounter. For if there is a God, and He made this universe and set up all its natural laws, it then makes perfect sense this Almighty Creator could have in the past temporarily suspended nature’s laws to accomplish or that purpose. And, if the Bible has shown itself reliable in its history of the kings and others of Judea and the Middle East which can be checked in part, then it’s “very likely” its record of various miracles should be believed as well, though those can’t be checked directly.. Much more could be said on this subject of being able to prove miracles did occur, but this much above makes it clear that miracles are not necessarily scientifically impossible or historiographically unprovable.²⁶

The Plain Truth writer in the letters section also said:

The writer [of “Who Really Wrote the Bible?”] was not asking anyone to accept the Bible on blind faith. The article itself implied that the Bible is not to be understood in this way. The writer was stressing that a person can only prove to himself whether the Bible is God’s Word. This is done not by blind faith but by living faith-- which means doing what it says.²⁷

Behind this particular passage I see the shadow of Cornelius Van Til and his system of presuppositionalist apologetics, or some such similar form of thinking, which was already explained above. Norman Geisler described one tenet of fideism this way: “The tests for truth are existential, not rational. Truth is tested personally in one’s life by submitting to God, and so forth, but not by human reason.”²⁸ However, we in the United Church of God (UCG) should not accept fideism or presuppositionalism, especially when the following book exists: R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, Classical Apologetics A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984). This book is a simply devastating refutation of fideism and presuppositionalism. Those interested in seriously pursuing this topic should purchase this book.

26 C.S. Lewis, Miracles A Preliminary Study (New York: Macmillan, 1978); Colin Brown, Miracles and the Critical Mind (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978). We have to remind ourselves that recorded, eyewitness accounts of any events in history, not just miracles, aren’t going to be “scientific,” as explained above. The process by which we can believe Octavian was part of the second Triumvirate is the same one ultimately by which we can believe the Red Sea parted.

27 His emphasis, “Letters,” Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

28 Geisler, Christian Apologetics, p. 59.

First, let's define and explain the term "fideism" more than has been done above previously. Fideism is the belief God's existence cannot and should not be proven, but that it should be accepted by faith alone. This belief is normally extended to accepting the Bible by faith alone. The first and obvious problem with this doctrine is: How are we to know which religion is correct? The Muslim will say he believes in the Quran (Koran), the Hindu in the Bhagavad-Gita, etc. and the Christian in the Bible. Obviously, since a contradiction cannot exist, somebody has to be wrong here, for these religions uphold contradictory doctrines. God gave us reason not only to keep us alive physically, but to sort out from among the various religions which one is the true way. Hence, fideism is a doctrine only of possible value to those who have the true religion already--presumably the Sabbatarian followers of Herbert W. Armstrong's teachings, and various assorted other Sabbatarian Christians. If we accept fideism, we can't easily rebuke Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Methodism as being errant, since those believing those ways could simply choose to fideistically accept their church's interpretations of the Bible. Fideism is a doctrine admirably suited to those raised with a certain faith who don't wish to change, for if all religions are equally blindly chosen, there's little reason to change from what their parents taught them. Since a fideist doesn't appeal to objective criteria that support his belief, he has no right to say to those who believe in others must be wrong: They could reply to him, "Obeying the Quran works for me!," or, "If I can't prove any religion to be right, then I'll stay a Buddhist."

Now the Bible tells us: "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good" (II Thess. 5:21). If we are to prove all things, may not this include the existence of God and the Bible's divine inspiration? "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20). Here Paul appeals to the existence of the universe as evidence of God's existence and certain of His attributes ("His eternal power and Godhead.") The gentiles are "without excuse" when they deny God's existence. ". . . [B]e ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). We can't do a good job of following Peter's injunction if we believe there aren't objective, external-to-the-Bible criteria for belief in Christianity. As it has been pointed out in a slightly different context:

What the advocates of this stance toward Scripture [which maintains you need not believe it is infallible to believe in it--EVS] fail to observe is that it is fundamentally dishonest to adopt the line of least resistance in the face of difficulty and say to the rationalistic skeptic, "Okay, in this instance you may be right. But I still have a right to hang on to my faith, no matter how many technical errors you may be able to discovered in the text of the Bible." He who assumes

such a position of intellectual surrender can only be classed as a weak-kneed irrationalist who has retreated into his own shell of subjectivity. He no longer has anything meaningful to contribute in the arena of debate and intelligent consideration all thinking men are responsible to engage in.²⁹

Paul's sermon on the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:22-31) presupposed external objective criteria existed, especially in its reference "to an unknown god" and its quote from a pagan poet, "We are his offspring." Notice Acts 17:27 in particular: "That they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." It seems that even uncalled people may be able to respond to God in some way, even if by mistaken means. Jesus said (John 14:11): "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves." Similarly, he said elsewhere (John 5:36): "[T]he very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." As Bernard Ramm pointed out:

Miracles are believed in non-Christian religions because the religion is already believed, but in the Biblical religion, miracles are part of the means of establishing the true religion. This distinction is of immense importance. Israel was brought into existence by a series of miracles, the law was given surrounded by supernatural wonders . . . It was the miracles authenticating the religion at every point.³⁰

As pointed out in I John 4:1: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." It's not wise--especially these days--to believe in the first person who says he knows the true way to God. Hence, the Bible doesn't necessarily support a fideistic view of accepting Christianity and believing in the one true God.

A standard definition for "prove" is "to establish truth or genuineness of, as by evidence or argument: to prove one's claim"³¹ Now--why does this term make us Christians so nervous when applied to God's existence or to the Bible's divine inspiration? First of all, we must realize that when we "prove" something, we are not creating it out of thin air. There must be facts from the external, real world that support the proof, directly or indirectly, for it to even be a proof. The rise of modern technology shows that the human race's reasoning processes in scientifically proving nature's laws, etc. must be getting at something "real" that doesn't immediately appear to the naked eye's perception, but which lies

29 Gleason L. Archer, Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), p. 26. Note the contrast to this WCG statement: "The validity of the Bible lies beyond the competence of archeology either to prove or to disprove. Matters of faith are not subject to objective testing" (Keith W. Stump, "Digging Up the Bible," Plain Truth, July 1995, p. 23.

30 as quoted in McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict, p. 123.

31 as found in The Random House Dictionary of the English Language The Unabridged Edition.

beneath the surface of things. To say, "The universe's complexity didn't happen by chance, therefore a Creator exists," doesn't create God from nothing due to our argument. If the premises are true, and the inference correct, then there's nothing to worry about: The conclusion must be true, if its a syllogism (since we are using the laws of logic then). There's no sensible reason to doubt the human race's intellectual processes are fundamentally flawed at their base when we have the technology to wipe ourselves from existence on this planet today. (As for being morally flawed--well, that's another story!)

The main reason why we are nervous when the word "prove" is used in connection with proving God's existence or the Bible's inspiration is that we think reason's role here denies the necessity of faith. People think: "If I can prove God to exist by reason, what's left for faith?" But this kind of thinking is in error: As Thomas Aquinas observed:

Faith has not that searching of natural reason which demonstrates [through a chain of proofs, such as a geometry theorem--EVS] what is believed, but a searching into those things through which a man is led to believe, for instance that such things have been uttered by God and confirmed by miracles.³²

Notice that believing in something due to seeing a miracle accompany the revelation in question is not a denial of faith, as is implied in what Jesus said in John 14:11 and 5:36 as quoted above.

The reason why faith is still needed even after seeing a miracle accompany an expression of God's thoughts through (say) a prophet is that there is no scientific or philosophical demonstration accompanying or proving the statement God inspired the prophet to make. When God said, "You shall not murder," He did not proceed to add a philosophical reason for this statement to Israel." He didn't say, "You shall not murder because of (say) "the greatest good for the greatest number, the categorical imperative, or the intrinsic value of human life."³³ The act of doing a miracle is not logically connected to the content of a revelation from God. You can't derive "You shall not steal" from earthquakes, storms, lightning flashes,, or even the hearing of God's own voice by any philosophical or scientific demonstration. God instead would rely on his authority ("Do this because I am the Eternal"--compare Lev. 19:37) or because of what he had done for Israel (Deut. 5:15): "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand

32 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part II of the Second Part, Q. II, A. I, reply obj. I.

33 "The greatest good for the greatest number" is the hallmark and guiding moral principle of the philosophers who advocated utilitarianism, such as the Englishmen Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. The "categorical imperative" was the basis of the moral principles of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The latter said that laws based on a categorical imperative should be such that you would will them to be universally able to be performed or acted upon.

and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.” Neither of these is a philosophical reason for obeying one of God’s laws. Hence, there would be evidence for accepting God’s decrees--his miracles and actions on behalf of Israel of humanity as a whole--but the decrees weren’t proven directly by logical arguments. Hence, faith is still needed after you have seen actual miracles (i.e. indirectly supporting evidence), as Israel’s murmuring in the wilderness showed despite having seen an incredible series of miracles.³⁴

Because of these considerations, the evidence for the Bible’s inspiration still constitutes indirect evidence, which is the kind of “proof” being done above. For we can’t prove everything in the Bible independently of the Bible, or else there would be little need for revelation. For the whole purpose of revelation is for God to tell us information we couldn’t--or couldn’t easily or with certainty--find out on our own. Nor can natural theology prove all the attributes and characteristics of the God of the Bible. We can prove the natural can’t always explain the natural, that the universe hasn’t always been there, that God is infinite,³⁵ that He has a mind,³⁶ “even his eternal power and Godhead,” but not everything. Proving God’s complete love for humanity by human reason can’t be done, or else we wouldn’t have all these people, including many professing Christians, so uneasy over God allowing evil to exist. As for accepting the Bible itself, this involves an inference that says that if some of it can be shown to imply knowledge unobtainable humanly, and some more of it lines up with archeology or ancient history, then ALL of it is inspired by God. Hence, a degree of faith is always necessary, even if there is excellent evidence for the Bible’s inspiration and for the existence of God.³⁷

Of course, other reasons exist for faith. First, it is always hard for people to believe in something with 100% certainty (which is the attitude faith always demands) which is hotly disputed and highly controversial. To believe in God and the Bible’s infallibility--or that Herbert W. Armstrong was used by God to restore Truth to the Christian church--are totally against many of our natural impulses and desires since many people don’t accept any of these beliefs. Even when you can prove God to exist to your own satisfaction, the fact that others

34 This concept of faith is taken from Summa Theologica. However, I wasn’t able to find the place where Thomas uses the examples of Mt. Sinai and the giving of the law to explain in more detail what he said about faith above.

35 See William G. Most, Catholic Apologetics Today: Answers to Modern Critics (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books and Publishers, 1986), p. 17.

36 Herbert W. Armstrong, Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong (1986), Vol. I, p. 298; Richard L. Purtill, C.S. Lewis’s Case for the Christian Faith (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), pp. 22-27.

37 J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 15-103; Josh McDowell, More Evidence that Demands Verdict (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here’s Life Publishers, 1981); Sproul, et al., Classical Apologetics, pp. 109-136.

aren't persuaded always can leave uncertainty in your mind concerning your rational arguments. You need faith in order to go against the (often) vast majority mentally. Second, it's hard for us humans to believe in something we can't visually see. Even though science has believed and still does believe in the existence of entities that weren't seen or haven't been seen, such as electrons, quarks, and other subatomic particles, people are less accepting of God's existence since, among other reasons, He makes moral demands on them! To believe in quarks doesn't affect your sex life--to believe in the Eternal does (or ought to). Third, we have to assume God is not trying to deceive us when He commands this or that--that He wills what is in our overall best interests. If God died for our sins, this shouldn't be anything to worry about! Fourth, as Thomas Aquinas maintained, the existence of God is not an article of faith, but a preamble to faith:

The existence of God and other like truths about God which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles. For faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent a man who cannot grasp a proof accepting, as a matter of faith, something which in itself is capable of being known and demonstrated.³⁸

Fifth, if we carefully define the roles of reason and faith, they need not conflict. Reason is mostly used for dealing with material things, and the few spiritual things (like God's existence) that can be inferred from material things. In other words, reason tells us how to catch our dinner primarily. Faith is used to keep us steady and stable in our belief in spiritual things, so that our emotions or the various temptations we are subjected to don't cause us to sin or to doubt the Bible. For you can always find evidence to cause you to doubt the Bible or God's existence. As Ellen White observed:

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.³⁹

But the real issue is where most of the evidence lies, and will we stay committed to God's way of life" Faith and the resulting commitment coming from it are

38 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, first part, question II, article II, reply obj. I.

39 Ellen G. White, The Greatest Love (originally--Steps to Christ) (Phoenix, Ariz.: Inspiration Books, 1975), p. 73.

absolutely necessary to stick to God's ways and to try to overcome sin. In short, so long as we realize that faith and reason don't conflict since they both provide knowledge,⁴⁰ we need not be nervous about using this word "prove" concerning God's existence or the Bible's divine inspiration.

Let's consider this concept of "certainty" before moving on. I have coined the term "rational certainty" to refer to facts or propositions (statements) that seem virtually certain, but for which 100% certainty doesn't actually exist. For human reason can't provide us with 100% certain except in math, logic, and certain direct sensations (perceptions), since we can always misinterpret the evidence of our senses, or lack enough information about the world for a fully certain judgment. Consider the following example: I have rational certainty that there is not 100 tons of gold 50 feet beneath my feet. I am so certain that there isn't this 100 tons of gold buried beneath me that I would bet all I own that there isn't any gold there. But I can't honestly say I have 100% certain that no gold is there. The only way I would have 100% certainty--ignoring some important epistemological problems about the nature of empiricism⁴¹ and the interpretation of sense data--is to go dig underneath the apartment I live in and see if any gold is buried 50 feet underneath me. Similarly, it is impossible to have 100% certainty when it comes to any scientific theories or law, or to most other facts gained by empirical research. For something could always be left outside our sample, and we could always have misinterpreted what we have observed. Since this 100% certainty simply can't be gained by human reason alone, God insists upon faith, which is an attitude in which we have 100% certainty about something which by human reason we simply can't get 100% certainty in. Faith, with its 100% certainty attitude, makes life and death commitment possible, which human reason, because it can't get full certainty, hesitates to make. While you could argue, despite all my logical arguments for Christianity, that I can't be 100% certain rationally Christianity is true, I could reply you can't be 100% certain you won't die the next time you get into an automobile. Humans routinely commit themselves to courses of action, even life-threatening ones, in which the chances of failure or death exist, and 100% certainty or 100% safety don't exist. God merely wants us to be totally committed 100% to Him and His way of life, even if the rational evidence available won't give us 100% certainty based upon human reason alone.

C.S. Lewis once made a similar point to that above about faith and rational certainty when he defined one of the meanings of faith thus: "Belief, in this sense, seems to me to be assent to a proposition which we think so

40 As John Calvin once said: "Faith consists not in ignorance, but in knowledge." Hence, we can worship God potentially using our minds' reasoning powers, so long as they are used in His service, and not against Him.

41 Empiricism is the philosophical belief that knowledge is gained mainly or exclusively by using our senses, such as sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. It is in contrast to rationalism, which maintains knowledge is gained mainly or exclusively by thought, reasoning, and logic.

overwhelmingly probable that there is a psychological exclusion of doubt, though not a logical exclusion of dispute.⁴²

Much evidence exists that uncalled people can find evidence that persuaded them to believe in God, the supernatural, or at least make them doubt evolution some. Consider the following quotes:

[The authors here are describing the chances for certain parts of the first living cell to occur by random chance through a chemical accident--EVS]. Consider now the chance that in a random ordering of the twenty different amino acids which make up the polypeptides it just happens that the different kinds fall into the order appropriate to a particular enzyme [an organic catalyst--a chemical which speeds up chemical reactions--EVS]. The chance of obtaining a suitable backbone [substrate] can hardly be greater than on part in 10^{15} , and the chance of obtaining the appropriate active site can hardly be greater than on part in 10^5 . Because the fine details of the surface shape [of the enzyme in a living cell--EVS] can be varied we shall take the conservative line of not "piling on the agony" by including any further small probability for the rest of the enzyme. The two small probabilities are enough. They have to be multiplied, when they yield a chance of on part in 10^{20} of obtaining the required in a functioning form [when randomly created by chance out of an ocean of amino acids--EVS]. By itself, this small probability could be faced, because one must contemplate not just a single shot at obtaining the enzyme, but a very large number of trials as are supposed to have occurred in an organize soup early in the history of the Earth. The trouble is that there are about two thousand enzymes and the chance of obtaining them all in a random trial is only one part in $(10^{20})^{2000}$ ain = $10^{40,000}$, an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup. [The number of electrons within the universe that can be observed by mankind's largest earth-based telescopes is approximately 10^{87} , which gives you an idea of how large this number is. This number would fill up about seven solid pages of the Plain Truth to print this number--40,000 zeros following a one--EVS]. If one is not prejudiced either by social beliefs or by a scientific training into the conviction that life originated on the Earth, this simple calculation wipes the idea entirely out of court.⁴³

42 C.S. Lewis, The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), p. 17.

43 Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe, Evolution from Space (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1981), p. 24. Both of these men were agnostics before writing this book, but as a result have embraced some type of pantheism due to calculations like these. (Pantheism is the belief

The only acceptable explanation is creation. I know that this is anathema to physicist, as indeed it is to me, but we must not reject a theory that we do not like if the experimental evidence supports it.⁴⁴

After having chided the theologian for his reliance on myth and miracle, science found itself in the unenviable position of having to create a mythology of its own: Namely, the assumption that what, after long effort, could not be prove to take place today had, in truth, taken place in the primeval past. [He says this because spontaneous generation cannot be observed taking place today, but scientists assume it took place billions of years ago, unobserved by any human, just like the first five days of Gen. 1--EVS].⁴⁵

One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet here we are--as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation. [If we Christians had this kind of faith, as this evolutionist had, we should be lifting up mountains for warm-up exercises daily--EVS]⁴⁶

The hypothesis that life has developed from inorganic matter is, at present, still an article of faith.⁴⁷

Astronomers are curiously upset by . . . proof that the universe had a beginning [as the Big Bang theory implies]. Their reactions provide an interesting demonstration of the response of the scientific mind--supposedly a very objective mind--when evidence uncovered by science itself leads to a conflict with the articles of faith in their profession. . . . There is a kind of religion in science; a faith that . . . every event can be explained as the product of some previous event. . . . This conviction is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid. . . . the scientist has lost control. If he really examined the implications, he would be traumatized. As

everything, including matter, is God, which is a foundational belief within Hinduism).

44 Physicist H.S. Lipson, Physics Bulletin, 1980, Vol. 31, p. 138.

45 Evolutionist Loren Eiseley, The Immense Journey (New York, 1957), p. 199. Spontaneous generation is the belief the first living cell by created by a chemical accident.

46 Dr. George Wald, a Nobel prize winner and Harvard biology professor, "The Origin of Life," The Physics and Chemistry of Life (Simon and Shuster, 1955), p. 9. Wald was either an agnostic or atheist when he wrote this, but later became some kind of pantheist. See Henry M. Morris, The Biblical Basis for Modern Science (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 407-408.

47 Mathematician J.W.N. Sullivan, Reader's Digest, January 1963, p. 92.

usual, when the mind is face with trauma, it reacts by ignoring the implications.⁴⁸

Hence, uncalled people can come to the conclusion God exists, or that at least something supernatural exists by reason alone, without committing themselves to a Christian lifestyle first.

Now the WCG also maintains: “How, then, can mere humans prove God’s existence or that the Bible is the word of God” God is beyond the reach of human, rational and logical thought.”⁴⁹ While God will always be beyond our full comprehension, He is still knowable to a degree even in this life, and He will be much more knowable in the next: “Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (I Cor. 13:12). As the apostle John put it: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). Thomas Aquinas put it this way:

Therefore some who considered this, held, that no created intellect can see the essence of God. This opinion, however, is not tenable. For as the ultimate happiness of man consists in the use of his highest function, which is the operation of the intellect, if we suppose that the created intellect could never see God, it would either never attain to happiness or its happiness would consist in something else beside God, which is opposed to faith. For the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of its being, since a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its principle. Further, the same opinion is also against reason. For there resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect which he sees, and from this wonder arises in men. But if the intellect of the rational creature could not reach so far as the first cause of things, the natural desire would remain void. Hence it must be absolutely granted that the blessed see the essence of God.⁵⁰

Hence, God is by no means unknowable in this life even, and will be much more knowable in the next.⁵¹

48 Professing agnostic Robert Jastrow, Los Angeles Times, June 25, 1978, part VI, pp. 1, 6.

49 Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

50 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, first part, question 12, article I; see also article 13 for the limits on our knowledge of God.

51 It should be noted that when we predicate terms to God such as “wise” or “mighty” that they have a somewhat difference, though analogous meaning when applied to humans (i.e., analogical predication). The word “cloud” is used analogously when it is used to mean “to cloud one’s meaning” and “the cloud blocked a lot of the sunlight.” By contrast, equivocal predication

This view God can't be known at all, or that His existence can't be proven, leads to a game of spiritual one-upmanship, similar to the games played by those who accept the old healing doctrine, and so will rely only on God for their healing. The fideist mystic says, "I'm more spiritual than you because I believe in God by faith alone, not by human reason." Likewise, the man or woman who says, "I'm more spiritual than you because I rely on God for healing, not the doctors." The root fallacy here was that God gave us our rational faculty as well, and created a world in which we have to use it. We don't see it a contradiction of our faith that "The Lord will provide" by going out to our secular jobs to earn money to support ourselves. God normally isn't going to drop food by our doors when we rely on Him in faith to supply our material needs. He expects us to do our part, just as Jacob made prudent measures when he was about to meet Esau and his 400 men, yet he still prayed for deliverance (Gen. 32:6-20; 33:1-16). Therefore, let's avoid judging one another for using human reason in the service of the defense of the faith, just as we no longer condemn the use of human reason in the form of medical science. HWA was inconsistent to be such a diehard believer in using human reason to prove the Bible's inspiration and God's existence, yet deny human reason's role in medical science in aiding humanity as being either a sin, or showing a lack of faith.

Hence, these views are seriously mistaken: "Man does not prove the Bible or God's existence through his own reasoning ability. God proves himself to those humans he has chosen to understand him."⁵² "One "proves" the Bible only by living it. There is no other way. . . . But we cannot prove it to ourselves unless we test out its claims by obeying the commands from God contained in its pages."⁵³ However, as illustrated above, too many agnostics or atheists turned traditional Christians (or believers in the supernatural) exist to agree with these statements. Many evidently by an intellectual process have been willing to accept Christianity as true, and only later begin to live a Christian life after having proving God to exist or the Bible as the word of God. The uncalled, as abundantly evidenced above, are perfectly capable of proving the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, or at least the existence of something beyond the natural and material, by human reason.

Now, let's evaluate the following fideistic claim:

involves using the same word in totally different ways, such as using the word "cape" to refer to an article of clothing and to a geographical feature ("the Cape of Good Hope.") Univocal predication occurs when the word has the same meaning in both situations, such as saying the word "day" in Gen. 1 and Ex. 20's fourth commandment both refer to 24 hour days. Hence, when the Bible uses the same word (say, "living") to both man and God, it doesn't have the same identical, univocal meaning. Specifically, this is how we "know in part" about God through the Bible (i.e. by analogical predication, not univocal).

52 his emphasis, Letters, Plain Truth, February 1989, p. 26.

53 his emphasis, Kroll, Plain Truth, October 1988, p. 10.

How important are archeological finds and “religious relicts”? Should we doubt what the Bible says if the remains of past civilizations don’t directly prove the biblical text? Certain discoveries can add to and improve our understanding of the Bible. However, in a world increasingly filled with false values and lies, we must be careful that we don’t base our faith on physical things. [Even when they bear witness of spiritual things (Rom. 1:20-21)”--EVS]. . . . We don’t need to worry about the authenticity of religious relics [the Shroud of Turin”--EVS] or the interpretation of archeological finds that seem to contradict the biblical record. Any truly authentic find will uphold the biblical record [Here, she is right--EVS] and, in any case, should be treated as no more than an interesting footnote to history.⁵⁴

What’s wrong here? If we say, “we don’t base our faith on physical things,” what’s to keep a Muslim from believing in the Quran (Koran), a Hindu in the Bhagavad-Gita, or an agnostic in his unbelief? While we can’t prove everything about Christianity, as explained above, by human reason, there is enough physical evidence that an inference to its truth is perfectly rational. Also, since we can plain see so much evidence already favoring Christianity, nothing possibly can now be unearthed that can falsify it. For if there is a God, and the Bible is true, nothing can possibly exist that can prove it false. The revelation of the earth and of the Word can’t contradict one another, if the Eternal exists. Only misinterpretations of the data, or fraud a la the Piltdown skull,⁵⁵ can really conflict with the Bible.

For example, the archeologist Kathleen Kenyon believed Jericho didn’t exist in the fifteenth century B.C., which was when Joshua’s army would have helped cause its destruction if the Bible’s chronology is taken literally. Instead, she said the destruction associated with the Exodus was pointed to by possible signs of demolition that occurred about 1325 B.C. Such a dating scheme would seriously conflict with the Bible’s dating for this event, which points to the destruction of Jericho’s walls circa 1405 B.C. However, in 1981 professor John J. Bimson reinvestigated evidence of a destruction that occurred in the 16th century B.C., and reinterpreted it to fit the 15th century, which was much closer to the time of Joshua. Supporting this view was the fact that only one pottery shard out of 150,000 found there in a cemetery was of the Mycenaean type. This type of pottery was heavily imported into this area from 1400 B.C. onwards.⁵⁶

54 Kathy Johnson, “Footnotes--or Fakes,” *Good News*, November-December 1990, p. 28.

55 This skull, “discovered” in England, was used as a missing link between men and monkeys. It stood basically unchallenged as a forgery for about 50 years. It combined a real human skull with a heavily filed orangutan’s lower jaw bone.

56 See *The Bible God’s Word or Man’s* (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1989), pp. 50-53; Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 156-157, 195.

Hence, while Kathy Johnson is right to say we shouldn't be concerned at present-day interpretations of archeological data that conflict with the Bible, it's nevertheless mistaken to fideistically imply the physical evidence is completely irrelevant to believing in the Bible. If such a conflict does occur, we Christians should put the controversy "on the shelf" of faith and not worry about it, and wait for a solution to show itself, as it did above. Some faith is necessary for such issues, but that doesn't mean we should become fideists.

More recently, and similar to the foregoing, we find this: "Despite archeology's valuable contributions, archeology doesn't prove the Bible true. We cannot anchor our faith on the tattered remains of the past. . . . The validity of the Bible lies beyond the competence of archeology either to prove or to disprove. Matters of faith are not subject to objective testing."⁵⁷ This attempt to sidestep higher critic assaults on the Bible by saying it can't be objectively tested is doomed to defeat. The likes of the Danish philosopher and theologian Soren Kierkegaard and (basically) the American philosopher William James tried this approach in one manner or another in the nineteenth century. However, the twentieth century higher critics know all about this means of ducking objective testing of religious truth claims, and have demolished it. A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth, and Logic (1936) did just that. But now, we need to explain the strange world of logical positivism and non-falsifiable hypotheses to see what's wrong here.

The philosophers Anthony Flew, A.J. Ayer, and Rudolf Carnap all maintained that a statement or proposition is meaningless unless it affects your present or future empirical experience. This principle, the infamous "verification principle," maintains that unless a statement could be prove true, or proven false, it is worthless and "means" nothing more than a set of nonsense syllables. It's as if you said nothing coherent unless your statement can be tested.

Let's give an example of how the verification principle works. Suppose somebody told you the world is only four minutes old. You would say that's nonsense, that you remember getting out of bed and taking a shower this morning. But he would reply, that memory also was created in your mind four minutes ago, and that you didn't actually experience it. You would mention dinosaur bones and sedimentary layers proving the earth is millions of years old. He would reply they were created four minutes ago also, and just appear to be older than that. You would mention chronicles and histories written by people long ago. He would say all those books and records were created four minutes ago also. You might say, where did my grandmother and mother come from" He would reply they were just created in the forms you see them, wrinkles and all, as is. And so on and on with your every counter-statement, he could "explain" it to fit his belief. But since his hypothesis can't possibly have any imagined

57 Keith W. Stump, "Digging Up the Bible," Plain Truth, July 1995, p. 20.

refutation, it means nothing. By “explaining” every possible counter-example, he has explained really nothing. If it can’t possibly be imagined to be false by any future empirical (sense-data) experiences you could have, it isn’t true or false—it is meaningless. By being able to “explain” every possible counter-example in advance that could falsify his belief about the four-minute-old earth, he has explained nothing and proven nothing. It all amounts to mere speculation—or rather, a non-falsifiable hypothesis, because nothing can possibly prove it to be false. In short, unless you take the “risk” and maintain certain future events (such as enough archeological evidence against it, or simply irreconcilable contradictions could be found) could prove the Bible false, the Bible is meaningless. (Whether there are such contradictions, or such archeological evidence, are other issues). Such an attempt to “protect” Scripture by the claim it isn’t subject to objective testing opens it up to A.J. Ayer’s charge it is empirically meaningless since no possible set of future experiences could prove it false (“falsify” it).

To give another example of how this principle works, suppose you state the moral truth, “God loves humanity.” A.J. Ayer would ask how does this affect our experience in this life. We experience in one way or another are hurts, personal betrayals, crime, poverty, wars, hurricanes, earthquakes, famines, etc. that will kill or hurt millions of people. These sensory experiences are opposed to the idea of an almighty, all-knowing God who loves everyone. How does such a statement, if it is true, make our future or present sensory experience any different for us than if it is false” If its being true has the same affect on our present or future sense data as if it was false, then why does such a statement matter” Then, if it has no effect on our lives presently or in the future, whether it is true or false, then this statement is meaningless as far as our personal experience is concerned, so then we can ignore it completely.

This same kind of reasoning can now be applied to when the literal text of the Bible, and its historical and scientific statements. When it is applied, these statements get discarded as irrelevant, since fideists say these should never be tested. However, unless you are willing to take the “risk” the Bible could be theoretically proven false, the logical positivists (or those influenced by them) will say it is automatically rendered meaningless. Unless you let the Bible stand for something that could be falsified (i.e. the Old and New Testaments concerning scientific and historical facts), the Bible is rendered irrelevant. The atheistic scientist (say) wants to be able to prove the Bible true or false as if it was a court trial or a lab experiment. If the Bible does not stand for something that can be tested, it stands for nothing. If you won’t take a “risk” and let future empirical experience judge whether it is true or not, atheists will declare the Bible ignorable and thus meaningless. Of course, one could rely on future verification to eventually prove them wrong (i.e., the Second Coming and/or the Great White Throne Judgment) but atheists will want to focus on something they can test in this life now.

Speaking more broadly, why should we maintain a rationalistic, objective base for Christian apologetics?" It's very simple. It is very dangerous to let the faculty of human reason fall into the hands of unbelievers as their sole property. If people generally believe accepting Christianity is irrational, the number of western people willing to give the Bible or God an unprejudiced look will continue to decline. The Christian world has never recovered from the blows inflicted on it by the likes of Hume, Kant, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Feuerbach, etc., for they believed human reason and the available evidence refuted the Bible's worldview. Hence, western intellectual take their secular premises almost totally for granted nowadays, and don't normally count God into their calculations seriously. However, since the time these men lived, the evidence favoring Christianity has grown much stronger (such as the law of biogenesis,⁵⁸ the second law of thermodynamics⁵⁹, a multitude of archeological discoveries, etc.), but such intellectuals and those they influence has seen little need to revise their paradigm⁶⁰ of the world. It's our job as Christians, in part, to call such secular assumptions into question, and this can only be convincingly done when facing such people on their own ground of human reason, much as Thomas Aquinas did in Summa Theological and Summa Contra Gentiles. Otherwise, these intellectuals will claim, either at the beginning of the millennium or after the second resurrection, "We couldn't have known better. For all we knew the Eternal was no more rational to believe in than Baal, Mithra, Siva, or some ancient pagan fertility cult." A major flaw of fideism is that it doesn't convincingly leave atheists and agnostics "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20), since its arguments make the intellectual acceptance of Christianity subjective, instead of as a logical inference concerning its base. Since western man is still very much a rational animal, despite all the extant epistemological skepticism among these same intellectuals, people even in the general public have the need to see Christianity as a rational option., not just an emotional one. Hence, we have the popularity of C.S. Lewis, Josh McDowell, Henry Morris, etc., all of whom use or did use a rationalistic base for defending Christianity.

58 This scientific law, whose validity was finally proven beyond doubt by the French scientist Louis Pasteur in the nineteenth century, says life comes only from life. It cannot happen by chance to dead or inanimate objects. It refuted spontaneous generation.

59 This well-proven law of physics says that the amount of useful energy in a closed system must always decline over time, while in an open system it will tend to decline. A 'system' is any place or thing in the universe that has energy going from a place of high concentration to a low concentration (or state of organization). A car using up its gas is a 'system,' as are natural objects such as a tree decaying due to bacteria attacking it. A car with a stuck gas cap could be compared to a closed system, since no more useful energy is entering it.

60 A paradigm is a fundamental approach or structure to viewing the world around us. This term was popularized by Thomas Kuhn's book dealing with scientific revolutions and the ways groups of scientists would suddenly, radically change the way they saw the world, instead of making just incremental additions to humanity's knowledge by routine, normal science due to accumulating anomalies.

Mr. Armstrong himself was very attractive intellectually for this reason: He said you could prove it all, whether it be from you Bible or by human reason. This surprisingly sophisticated approach--It's so anti-fideistic at its base--was what made the theology of the WCG attractive to many in the past. That's how, after God called her, HWA was able to persuade the atheistic secretary of the local communist party to accept Christianity, and to successfully put another communist on the defensive.⁶¹ As the former put it:

To tell the truth we three girls thought it would be good sport to come out here and laugh at the ignorant medieval religious superstition we expected to hear. I've always believed religion is a silly superstition--the "opium of the people." But tonight we couldn't laugh. I never heard anything like this. I have to admit no human writer could have written that long prophecy [of Dan. 11--EVS] and made it come to pass, step by step, over so many years. What I heard tonight makes sense. It is not like any religious teaching I ever heard. I want to ask you some questions.⁶²

A fideistic approach, emphasizing blind faith, such as was found in the July 1993 Plain Truth article "Religion and Science Bridging the Gap," will inevitably fail to bring such people to God. While some will come to the true God based upon emotion or family tradition, we should also be ready to use human reason to win the diehard skeptic, or at least put him on the defensive intellectually. We have to become all things to all men that we might be able to save some (I Cor. 9:22), using human reason when necessary at the bare minimum. Normally only a hard-line position on the objectivity of the evidence for Christianity which can be verified before commitment to Christ will cause such people to give us a second look. Even concerning the general public's willingness to consider Christianity it would take only a small dose of skepticism, or a refusal to address in a convincing fashion such unbelief, to cause many of them to just tune us out. Take this kind of "comme si, comme ca" approach to apologetics that is found in various recent WCG publications has a high cost. It leaves Christianity (at best) as one possibly rational choice out of several, which will sound too uncertain a note for such strong skeptics to really give Christianity a serious look normally. By contrast, HWA's hard-line position--that is, one insisting upon the objective evidence for faith in Christ--as illustrated above can much more successfully challenge and jar free the intellectual honest (and called) agnostics and atheists from their unbelief. Of course, many such people will never believe this side of the millennium or the second resurrection, but it will at least put them on notice. We should follow the lead of Thomas Aquinas and appropriate human reason for the service of Christ, or else unbelievers will use it to draw at least some of the called to their eternal deaths since they'll persist believing Christianity is

61 HWA, Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong (1986), Vol. 1, pp. 581-585.

62 Ibid., p. 581.

irrational. Hence, we in the UCG today should give serious thought to routinely using Christian apologetics in our message to the world in order to deal with common intellectual objections made against Christianity.

Consider the problems with this statement: "But from a strictly scientific point of view, other interpretations of the design of the universe, including the earth, are possible. Thus, many scientists do not regard design as irrefutable proof of God's existence."⁶³ But are other interpretations possible? Can nature always explain itself, without ever referring to the supernatural to explain it? For example, above was used the calculation by the astronomers Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe. They calculated that the chance of getting the 2000 enzymes a living cell must have in order to operate as no less than one out of $10^{40,000}$ by a random chemical accident. By contrast, the number of electrons in the observable universe is a mere 10^{87} approximately. This leads to the key point: If nature can't explain nature, then a resort to the supernatural is perfectly rational. We shouldn't worry about creating a "God of the gaps" when the problems in question are surely permanent. The problem Hoyle and Wickramasinghe found here in explaining spontaneous generation is an embedded feature of nature, and future discoveries almost certainly won't get rid of it. Hence, these two men abandoned their agnosticism for a kind of pantheism, knowing there was no way out rationally for any kind of dogmatic anti-supernaturalism when facing such a number. While some will claim in reply to such calculations as theirs that the universe has natural laws built into its matter that will inevitably cause life to arise, and that molecules do not act randomly, there is in fact no evidence for such a claim. It is an unprovable, nonfalsifiable hypothesis.⁶⁴ Proving spontaneous generation is possible is the biggest hurdle any atheist or agnostic faces. Had the law of biogenesis been known in the eighteenth century, or the second law of thermodynamics, one wonders if David Hume would have sat down to write Dialogues on Natural Religion.

Mr. Halford also says: "Gaps in understanding of the process of evolution do not automatically provide evidence of a divine creation. Literalists and creationists must be careful not to seize on gaps or limitations in knowledge with a triumphant 'Ha, there you see. We were right all along.'"⁶⁵ However, the very existence of the punctuated equilibrium school of thought is proof scientists think the gaps in the fossil record aren't about to be closed. Why? By now it's reasonable to believe we have a roughly representative sample of the fossil record with all the searching done to prove Darwin right since the publication of The Origin of the Species in 1859. Humanity has discovered literally billions of fossils, and museums have altogether around 250,000 different species of

63 his emphasis, John Halford, "Religion and Science Bridging the Gap," Plain Truth, July 1993, p. 17.

64 See Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, Reasons Skeptics Should Consider Christianity (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1981), pp. 137-139.

65 Halford, Plain Truth, July 1993, p. 19.

fossils, which are represented by millions of catalogued fossils.⁶⁶ As T.N. George conceded: “There is no need to apologize any longer for the poverty of the fossil record. In some ways it has become almost unmanageably rich and discovery is outpacing integration.”⁶⁷ David Raup is on record as saying we now have such an enormous number of fossils that the conflict between the theory of evolution and the fossil record can’t be blamed on the “imperfection of the geologic record.” He even conceded: “. . . ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin’s time. By this I mean that some of the classic cases of Darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded or modified as a result of more detailed information.”⁶⁸ If evolutionary scientists have to resort to the punctuated equilibrium theory to explain the fossil record, after having (mostly) been committed to gradualism (neo-Darwinism) for so long, it’s a sign they think the gaps are never going to be filled. Hence, the scientific creationists should be given credit for constantly bringing this problem to public attention, otherwise most evolutionary scientists might still believe in neo-Darwinism wholeheartedly.

Hence, this statement isn’t correct: “Faith must no find refuge only in unexplained gaps in human knowledge. Those gaps have a habit of closing suddenly, sometimes on the fingers of those clinging to them.”⁶⁹ Instead, we can see that the gaps have been closing hard on the hands of the evolutionists. As Raup (who is the curator of the Field Museum of Natural History of Chicago) said above, there are even fewer transitional forms known today than were over 100 years ago, and this despite we could well have a statistically representative sampling of the fossil evidence available. As Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge once said:

At the higher level of evolutionary transition between basic morphological [structural] designs, gradualism has always been in trouble, though it remains the “official” position of most Western evolutionists. Smooth intermediates between Bauplane [that is, as Gish defines them, “basically different types of creatures”--EVS] are almost impossible to construct, even in thought experiments; there is certainly no evidence for them in the fossil record (curious mosaics like Archaeopteryx⁷⁰ do not count).⁷¹

66 Duane T. Gish, Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record (El Cajon, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1985), p. 42.

67 T.N. George, Science Progress 48:1 (1960), as quoted in Gish, Ibid.

68 As quoted in Henry M. Morris and Gary E. Parker, What Is Creation Science (El Cajon, Calif.: Master Books, 1987), pp. 131-132.

69 Halford, Plain Truth, July 1993, p. 20.

70 This fossil is the famous supposed “half reptile, half bird.” Actually, it is far more bird than reptile.

71 their italics, S.J. Gould and N. Eldredge, Paleobiology 3:147 (1977), as quoted in Gish, Evolution, p. 115.

Furthermore, future fossil discoveries can mess up the evolutionists, unlike what is implied by this statement quoted above. The discovery of the human skull KNM-ER 1470, originally dated at 2.9 million years, posed enormous problems for the traditional view of the evolutionary development of mankind up until the date was massaged down to 1.9 million years after a decade of scientific controversy.⁷² Discoveries of fossils being out of place in the geological strata have been a continual problem for evolutionists. The faith evolutionists have is far more likely to be upset by future fossil discoveries than the strict creationist's.

Indeed, for years the scientific evidence has been moving in our favor, as loath as evolutionists are to admit it. Much more evidence has come to light favoring catastrophism over uniformitarianism, and creationism over evolution (i.e. the gaps in the fossil record). Otherwise, scientists wouldn't be seriously speculating about how an asteroid may have led to the extinction of dinosaurs, which would have been the wildest of heresies even 30 years ago. Likewise, the same goes for how the gaps in the fossil record have placed neo-Darwinism very much on the defensive in favor of the punctuated equilibrium theory--or special creationism. Halford worries about how future fossil discoveries could fill in these gaps, but if scientists after millions of fossils have been found and catalogued over more than a century of research are still no closer to filling them in, why should WE be the ones worrying"

Another problem with this statement above is that it implies God's existence can never be inferred or deduced from the existence of the universe or its design. Instead, the atheist or agnostic can always claim that future discoveries which would fill in these current gaps in our knowledge will prove him right. The creationist is surely more rational for pointing to all the evidence that right now exists to prove his point of view as opposed to the atheist's, who hopes future evidence might come to exist to prove his point of view. Furthermore, the creationist really, fundamentally has nothing to worry about concerning future discoveries. For should his point of view be correct, then the revelation of the earth cannot contradict the revelation of the Bible. If God did what He says he did in the Bible, then nothing possibly can be unearthed that would refute God's written revelation, barring human misinterpretation of the discovery, or outright fraud (a la the Piltdown skull). We can already find such overwhelming evidence for the Bible's inspiration that we can count on what is unknown not to contradict the already existing evidence. In case it seems there is a contradiction, such as over the age of the fallen walls of Jericho, we should simply have faith and confidence that a solution may be found to any such problems that may arise. In the case of Jericho, earlier dating estimates that made the fallen walls exist at the wrong time have been contradicted by later findings. Hence, we shouldn't worry

72 See Marvin L. Lubenow, Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils (Grand rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992), pp. 247-266. This recent work brilliantly attacks the idea of human evolution in a readable way.

that the revelation of the earth may one day contradict the written revelation of the Bible ultimately.

Halford also maintains: "It is possible that new discoveries could yet provide irrefutable evidence that one kind of creature can change into another, as a result of macromutations."⁷³ Now this may refer to Richard B. Goldschmidt's "hopeful monster" mechanism. He believed in massive, all-at-once mutations between basic kinds of animals were necessary to explain the fossil record. However, evolutionists themselves have largely refused to accept this type of evolution as occurring, for massive mutations will result in a quick death for the creature so afflicted. Also, such a spectacular accident would make mating virtually impossible for such a creature as well, even if it miraculously survived.⁷⁴ As for the punctuated equilibrium theory, it can be emphasized enough that this theory is a non-falsifiable hypothesis, for it was created to explain a lack of evidence (i.e. transitional fossils), not to explain something that has been actually observed. This theory just maintains we can't find fossil evidence of transitional creatures because the alleged evolution in question occurred in small, isolated group(s) of a species very rapidly, leaving no trace in the fossil record. Lubenow brilliantly summarized the problems with the punctuated equilibrium theory in this manner:

For a hundred years evolutionists paraded the fossils they had found as evidence for evolution. They promised more and better fossils in the future, hoping that luck and the tooth fairy would validate their hopes. In the early 1970s, when it became obvious that we had a more than adequate sampling of the fossil record, the grim reality dawned that those transitional fossils were not to be found. The punctuated equilibria model of evolution was then invented to explain why they were not found. However, it is imperative to emphasize that the punctuated equilibria model does not remove the need for transitional fossils. It just explains why those transitions have not been found. Certainly, the punctuated equilibria theory is unique. It must be the only theory ever put forth in the history of science which claims to be scientific but then explains why evidence for it cannot be found.⁷⁵

Evolutionists claim they are merely just arguing about the mechanism by which evolution occurred (its "how"), not about whether it occurred (its existence), in the debate between neo-Darwinism and the punctuated equilibrium model. However, this claim betrays an anti-supernaturalist a priori bias. Taking secularism for granted, and wiping God out of the picture from the start, and

73 Halford, Plain Truth, July 1993, p. 20.

74 See the description of this issue in Gish, Evolution, pp. 234-240.

75 Lubenow, Bones of Contention, p. 182.

using the premise that ONLY nature can explain nature, they are confident evolution occurred even though they don't know how it occurred. But is not science supposed to explain the "hows", leaving the "whys" to religion? If they can't explain how it occurred, and nobody has observed macroevolution personally, why should we believe in it in the first place, as opposed to God creating all the basic types of creatures? If they can't explain how evolution occurred, based on their anti-supernaturalist assumptions, maybe it's time to question these assumptions, instead of assuming evolution is a fact and inventing the punctuated equilibrium model to explain the lack of evidence for that "fact" occurring in a scientifically explainable manner.

Also, we need to emphasize that the scientific term 'species' should never be equated with the word in Genesis 1 translated "kind" (min). A rough, crude equivalent to "min" would be a taxonomic "family," or perhaps "genus." These are the next two higher categories over 'species' in the biologist's taxonomic scale by which he (or she) categorizes all creatures. The error made by Bible literalists who were scientists in the past, such as Linneaus (who devised the Latin naming system for animals), was to say God created all the species during the six days of creation that now still live. This mistake has continued to figure in most assaults on creationism by evolutionists since the time of Darwin, for there is good evidence that some evolution is possible ("microevolution.") All creationists need to maintain in reply is that microevolution is possible, but that fundamental changes greater than those on the level of a "family" are impossible due to the intrinsic limits on natural biological changes built into animals and plants. Creationists must concede changes on the species level in order to have any hope of scientific credibility. For example, Kozhenvikov developed a new species of vinegar fly from two strains of Drosophila melangogaster, and correspondingly named it Drosophila artificialis. In nature, the spontaneous crossing of two white flowers, A. Pavia and A. Hippocastanum created the pink flower, Aesculus Carnea (which is a horse chestnut).⁷⁶ Hence, the species of finches Darwin observed on the Galapagos Islands during his famous voyage on the HMS Beagle probably were derived from one or more basic kinds that survived the Deluge of Noah's time many thousands of years before. These basic kinds then speciated in their relatively isolated environments on these islands. Evolutionists can easily prove species have changed. However, they can't prove anything higher than a taxonomic family has changed naturally.

Halford also maintains that: "Once more, let's stress that you cannot scientifically prove nor disprove the existence of God."⁷⁷ This statement's truth depends on what definition of 'scientifically' is being employed. Does 'scientifically' refer to all human reasoning, or just those aspects of it that involve

76 Frank Lewis Marsh, Evolution or Special Creation (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Association, 1963), p. 13. See also p. 9-15, 42-43 for a more general discussion of this issue.

77 Halford, Plain Truth, July 1993, p. 20.

the systematic observation, collection, and organization of reproducible phenomena (i.e., ‘science’ strictly considered). For humanity has information that is obtained by other means than the scientific method, such as by history and that obtained by the kind of abstract reasoning used in philosophy, logic, and mathematics that is largely non-empirical. The statement, “Wellington and Blucher won the battle of Waterloo in 1815” is not scientific. This event cannot be reproduced, nor was it observed by anyone alive today. Historians simply have to rely on what past eyewitnesses, or other primary and secondary documents have said about the past. This historical method of gaining knowledge is simply not scientific, strictly defined, but this doesn’t mean it isn’t a reliable means for unaided human reason to find knowledge. “Historical evidence,” i.e. eye-witness evidence, is the kind of evidence our court system normally relies upon to convict criminals and determine the outcome of lawsuits, not so much scientific evidence. (The O.J. Simpson trial’s focus on DNA evidence, like other aspects of this case, was hardly normal!) Hence, the Bible isn’t a science textbook for the specific reason that much of the information it conveys is historical in nature. (Nevertheless, though it’s not a science textbook, whatever statements it makes on scientific subjects will be without error). And then while philosophy will rely on the information science and history will yield to it, nevertheless it features a heavy reliance on a priori, abstract reasoning that makes it somewhat different in its epistemology than these other two fields. In this regard, the science of mathematics is also extremely dependent on a priori, abstract reasoning as well, yet repeatedly later on we find evidence in nature of its accuracy empirically. There’s simply something about such abstract, “pure” (i.e. without using sense data) thinking by humans that often can be very accurate in describing what really is out there in the real world. (This is no surprise, since the same God who designed the universe the human mind perceives also created the human mind to begin with). Hence, while ‘science’ narrowly considered may not be able to prove God’s existence (for example, God isn’t directly observable--yet--nor reproducible), data provided by science can make the inference (not a “leap of faith”) to the existence of the supernatural from the natural a rational judgment. This one out of $10^{40,000}$ number provided by Hoyle and Wickramasinghe is in this category: The impossibility of spontaneous generation by random chemical reactions implies God exists. So does the second law of thermodynamics, since it implies the universe had a beginning. While human reason can’t give 100% certainty for Christianity, it can give enough evidence that those who reject it are “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). We aren’t 100% certain that the next time we get into a car that we will survive the ride, but we don’t find this to be a major hurdle in committing ourselves to car ownership and ridership. Neither should the slight--very slight--lack of rational certainty that exists about Christianity being provable by human reason this side of the millennium should keep us from committing ourselves to Christ.

Halford also said in this article: “But this is not saying that the facts uncovered by science inevitably pile up to the point where the agnostic--or even

the atheist--must conclude there is a Creator.” But, is this true due to a lack of evidence to persuade, or is it one of volition, a lack of willingness, for the unbeliever to capitulate? As the authors of Classical Apologetics point out:

The excuse that is banished, the excuse every pagan hopes in vain to use, the excuse that is exploded by God’s self-revelation in nature is the pretended, vacuous, dishonest appeal to ignorance. [The authors, in context, are discussing Rom. 1, and, in particular, verse 20--EVS]. No one will be able to approach the judgment seat of God justly pleading, “If only I had known you existed, I would surely have served you.” That excuse is annihilated. No one can lightly claim “insufficient evidence” for not believing in God. Though people are not always persuaded by sound and sufficient evidence, it does not follow that the evidence is therefore insufficient. The failure here is with human, not with the evidence. [My emphasis here--EVS]. The problem is not a lack of evidence, nor a lack of knowledge, nor a lack of natural cognitive equipment--it is a moral deficiency. We are culpable for our refusal to submit to the evidence God plainly provides.⁷⁸

Hence, contrary to the view there aren’t enough facts to automatically persuade those called in this life that Christianity is true, I maintain such coercive evidence does exist, but that modern western intellectuals have striven to ignore it, cover it up, or even intentionally create fabrications that seem to falsify it (i.e. the Piltdown skull). Instead, since we have minds clouded by an evil human nature that is hostile against God intrinsically (Rom. 8:7), atheists and agnostics can always seize upon this or that loose end in the evidence to justify their stance. After all, there are those who believe in a flat earth, notwithstanding all those NASA photographs, right? The human mind can always rationalize away evidence contrary to its beliefs (“cognitive dissonance.”)

The evidence for Christianity isn’t 100% certain, but then again we routinely commit ourselves to major life decisions without full certainty as well. Can I be 100% certain I will find a relevant job after going to college for four years? Can I be 100% certain this woman or man I’m marrying is the right one? Can I be 100% certain this house I’m buying isn’t secretly a money pit that will require endless repairs? The answer to all these questions is no, but that doesn’t stop us from going to college, marrying, or buying houses. Furthermore, in the case of accepting Christianity, an additional factor is operating: Since humanity has an evil human nature, we often don’t want Christianity to be true since we don’t want God telling us what to do with our lives. Unlike the case with

⁷⁸ their emphasis, unless otherwise noted, R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984), p. 46.

accepting or rejecting the existence of electrons, or a flat earth, to accept Christianity seriously necessarily involves major restrictions on our choice of actions in dealing with others. Protons don't crimp our "lifestyle"--but God does! This reluctance is especially true in the area of sex.⁷⁹ The evidence for accepting the existence of God can be laid out in the form of, and is as strong as, the scientific inferences scientists make from seen entities to unseen ones. Scientists were quite willing to believe in the existence of electrons long before they could be seen. Similarly, the unseen supernatural world can be inferred to exist by various puzzles in the material natural world. The key difference here is that God makes moral demands on us, while believing in electrons doesn't, which makes people much more willing to accept the existence of the latter than the former.

Furthermore, this statement by Mr. Halford just above wasn't in accordance with Mr. Armstrong's experience with an atheist who he got to concede the existence of God when skillfully verbally cornered by Mr. Armstrong. Astonishingly, he even said: "I won't worship God even if you do make me admit He exists!" On another occasion later, this same man said: "I'll never bend my knees to your Christ."⁸⁰ True, as we have always maintained based upon John 6:44, 65, we can't argue uncalled people into the kingdom of God. This cited example shows this as well. But we can leave the atheists and agnostics on the intellectual defensive if we play our cards right, and encourage even the uncalled sometimes to improve their lives some if they think God can't be evaded intellectually. For God has commanded all to repent now, not just the called (Acts 17:30), which implies even the broad mass of humanity can live their lives better than they are now spiritually. Hence, we should ignore the siren call of Cornelius Van Til and company to fideism, and instead follow the lead of R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, Arthur Lindsley, John Warwick Montgomery, Josh McDowell, Don Stewart, C.S. Lewis, and Francis Schaeffer in opposition to fideism.

Now let's move on to a different, but related subject, I have to object to Dr. Herman Hoeh's pre-Adamic man theories, and his view that radiocarbon dating is reliable. Here I'll leave the main refutation of his theories and radiocarbon dating's reliability to my references.

First of all, we should follow the lead of John Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, and discard a c. 4000 B.C.. date for the creation of Adam.⁸¹ If we can get

79 The English author and intellectual Aldous Huxley once confessed: "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption . . . We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom" (As quoted in Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation" (New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1967), p. 130).

80 his emphasis, HWA, Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong (1986), pp. 584-585.

81 John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Flood The Biblical Record and Its

an extra few thousand years since the creation of Adam, many of the problems Dr. Hoeh must have encountered in his researches concerning the beginning of civilization can be solved or alleviated. In particular, if we can push back the date of the flood from c. 2459 B.C. to 4500 B.C. or earlier, many dating problems can be solved. For example, the great pyramids at Giza in Egypt were built c. 2600 B.C., which would mean they survived the great Deluge if we accept Usher's dating for it. However, there is a casualty to taking this approach: the 6000 year plan idea based upon the day for a thousand years principle of II Pet. 3:8 being applied to the creation week of Gen. 1 gets discarded. Although this principle is very old and well attested in the early Catholic Church Writers and other ancient writings (as a recent piece in the World Ahead magazine showed), nevertheless it has to be seen as speculation, albeit a very venerable one.

Next, radiocarbon dating is not as reliable as evolutionists think it is. It's based on assumptions that are decidedly shaky for anything over three or four thousand years old. Let's give some examples of C-14 dating at work. The shells of living mollusks (sea shells) have given radiocarbon date up to 2,300 years old.⁸² In northern Iraq, a prehistoric village named Jarmo has given radiocarbon dates for over a 6000 year range, yet according to the archeological evidence, was occupied for only about 500 years. The same antler was dated by Yale University three different times, and it gave three different ages: 5,340 years, 9,310 years, and 10,320 years. The University of Chicago and the University of Michigan dated the same piece of bark at ages varying from 1,168 to 2,200 years.⁸³ The reason for such obvious dating problems results from the flawed assumptions of radiocarbon dating, such as the belief the amount of radiocarbon in the atmosphere hasn't been increasing, which I won't discuss here.⁸⁴ Before the church would go on record as saying radiocarbon dating is reliable, we should do very serious research, especially consulting what various scientific creationists have said.

Concerning pre-Adamic men themselves, all we need concede is that various monkeys or apes lived prior to the disaster spoken of in Gen. 1:2. Such creatures as *propliopithecus*, *dryopithecus*, *ramapithecus*, *oreopithecus*, and

Scientific Implications (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1961), pp. 474-489. This classic scientific creationist work should be carefully studied before accepting Dr. Hoeh's pre-Adamic men theories.

82 Henry Morris, ed., Scientific Creationism (San Diego, Calif.: Creation-Life Publishers, 1974), p. 162. This book contains an excellent critique of all the standard dating methods based on radioactive decay, as well as a devastating refutation of the day-age interpretation of Gen. 1 which Pasadena has been leaning towards in recent years.

83 Josh McDowell and Don Steward, Reasons Skeptics Should Consider Christianity (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1981), p. 116.

84 See Ibid., pp. 115-117; Morris, Scientific Creationism, pp. 161-167; Harold S. Slusher, Critique of Radiometric Dating (San Diego: Institute for Creation Research, 1973), pp. 34-41; Walter E. Lammerts, ed., Why Not Creation? (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1970), pp. 80-105.

even the various australopithecines, are all far more like monkeys than men. Even the latter had a brain size of only 500 c.c., which is close to a gorilla, and is about one third of modern men.⁸⁵ It does appear that the australopithecines could not walk upright, or did so no more than gorillas do today.⁸⁶ Anatomist Solly Lord Zuckerman maintained: "Our findings leave little doubt that . . . Australopithecus resembles not Homo sapiens but the living monkeys and apes." Concerning the famous australopithecine skeleton called "Lucy," the magazine New Scientist said it had a skull "very much like a chimpanzee's."⁸⁷ On the other hand, the Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons are very similar to present-day men, and should be seen as descendants of Adam. A Neanderthal is so much like Homo sapiens that: "It has been said that if he were given a shave, a haircut and a bath and dressed in a business suit, and were to talk down one of our city streets, he would be given no more attention than any other individual."⁸⁸ Cro-Magnons (which are the race of men who made the famous wall drawings found in a cave in southern France) are classified as modern humans. Dr. Hoeh's view Adam was just like creatures who had existed before him, but had the 'spirit of man' (I Cor. 2:11) added, is an unprovable and unnecessary non-falsifiable hypothesis. Anyway, to say these pre-Adamic men could make arrows, engage in agriculture, trade merchandise, and (according to my former pastor's version) use the wheel, waters down greatly our view of how important the spirit in man is for making men different from animals mentally.⁸⁹ All we Christians need to do is maintain these bones of "hominids" are either those of monkeys and apes on the one hand, or modern men (homo sapiens) on the other, without any obvious transitional forms in-between, which is easy to do.⁹⁰

Finally, much evidence exists for geological strata to be analyzed from the

85 Duane T. Gish, Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record (El Cajon, Calif.: Master Books, 1985), p. 145.

86 See the discussion of Oxnard and Zukerman's research in Ibid., pp. 148-151. The famous fossil "Lucy," which is a member of the australopithecine family, has been argued to be able to walk upright (was bipedal). However, the key joint bone in the leg used to argue for this came from an area significantly distant from the rest of the skeleton, and most likely shouldn't be considered as part of the rest of the skeleton. (Shades of the Java man problem!)

87 As quoted in Life "How Did It Get Here", p. 94.

88 Gish, Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record, p. 204.

89 These characterizations of what pre-Adamic men could do are based upon my sermon notes for a sermon given on October 22, 1988 by Gerald Witte in Montrose, Michigan, and a sermon by Dr. Herman Hoeh himself on May 15, 1990 in Lansing, Michigan.

90 One wonders if Dr. Hoeh would have persisted in these speculations for so many years if he had had a copy of Marvin L. Lubenow's Bones of Contention A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1992). Lubenow brilliantly lays waste evolutionist speculations on the subject of human evolution, particularly by pointing out the known diversity of the shapes and sizes of human beings, which evolutionists have ended up categorizing as different species. See also Gish, Evolution: The Challenge of the Fossil Record, pp. 130-228, who deals with the austropithecines, unlike Lubenow. Additional sources are: Evan Shute, Flaws in the Theory of Evolution (London, Ontario: Temside Press, 1961), pp. 206-227; R.L. Wysong, The Creation-Evolution Controversy (East Lansing, Mich.: Inquiry Press, 1976), pp. 295-300; and Life "How Did It Get Here", pp. 83-98.

point of view of catastrophism as opposed to uniformitarianism. Catastrophism maintains the fossil record and geological strata was largely laid down by disasters and rapid geological processes such as massive flood(s) which can't be currently observed, while uniformitarianism says these were laid down by slow, gradual processes such as erosion, wind, rainfall, etc. which can be currently observed. Dr. Hoeh maintained that for mining to be successful, mining engineers had to know the order of the strata. But is this the case? The strata aren't as orderly as we may like to think. Dr. David Raup, an evolutionist and curator of geology at the Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago), was willing to say: "The fossil record of evolution is amenable to a wide variety of models ranging from completely deterministic (i.e. compatible with evolution) to completely stochastic (i.e. random in order)."⁹¹ He was also willing to say in another place: 'so the geological time scale and the basic facts of biological change over time are totally independent of evolutionary theory. . . . One of the ironies of the evolution-creation debate is the creationists have accepted the mistaken notion that the fossil record shows a detailed and orderly progression and they have gone to great lengths to accommodate this "fact" in their flood geology."⁹² While in reply the likes of Van Til and company in Science Held Hostage dwell on the Grand Canyon in one chapter in this book, they totally ignore the many, many more anomalies that exist for any thorough-going uniformitarianism. For example there is the "Lewis overthrust" of Montana, which includes Glacier National Park, in which ancient pre-Cambrian rock sits directly on top of (much more recent) Cretaceous rock in apparent conformity. This formation is around 330 miles long by 35 miles wide and six miles thick. There is every reason to believe the (supposedly) nearly billion years old rock was formed in situ over the (allegedly) hundred million years old rock layer underneath, which constitutes a particularly troublesome anomaly to uniformitarianism.⁹³ Many, many other anomalies could be cited, but I'll leave them to my references.⁹⁴ Suffice it to say, we should stick with the views of the Seventh-day Adventist geologist George McCready Price and other creationist scholars, instead of embracing uniformitarianism, which even some secular scientists seriously question (such as Derek Ager). A few evolutionists are willing to agree with HWA that evolutionary theory faces a problem with circular reasoning as it uses fossils to order the strata, and then uses the strata's order to fossils to "prove" evolution. As evolutionist Tom Kemp conceded: "A circular argument arises: Interpret the fossil record in the terms of a particular theory of evolution, inspect the

91 As quoted in Henry M. Morris, The Biblical Basis for Modern Science (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 361.

92 Ibid., p. 362.

93 See Henry M. Morris, The Remarkable Birth of Planet Earth (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), pp. 21-23; Morris and Whitcomb, The Genesis Flood, pp. 184-195.

94 Derek V. Ager, The Nature of the Stratigraphical Record (New York: Macmillan, 1981); Whitcomb and Morris, The Genesis Flood; Immanuel Velikovsky, Earth in Upheaval (New York: Dell Publishing, 1955); Reginald Daly, Earth's Most Challenging Mysteries (The Craig Press, 1972).

interpretation, and note that it confirms the theory. Well, it would, wouldn't it?"⁹⁵ Hence, with the intellectual foundation various creationist scholars and scientists provide for us, we need not give in to the evolutionists to the extent Dr. Hoeh's speculations do on pre-Adamic men.

Pasadena also has made moves toward not taking the days of Gen. 1 literally: "This is not the time or place to go into the reasons why Genesis might not be referring to literal days and nights. We will explore it as time and space permits in The Plain Truth. . . . However, we should address a legitimate concerns: If we accept the possibility that the days and nights of creation week are not literal, what does that do to the Sabbath"⁹⁶ Here, the problems becomes a failure to take seriously the highly detailed arguments about fundamentalist interpretations of Gen. 1-2, and attempt to refute their defenses of the seven days in question being 24 hours each. For example, Neil Earle in his article mentions three ways of interpreting Gen. 1: "1. The strictly literal . . . 2. The mythical-symbolic interpretation. . . . 3. The median view."⁹⁷ He, in the rest of this article as well as a sidebar article labeled "Origins and Destiny," proceeds to defend the third "median" view. What gets ignored here is that there is little difference between the second view, the "mythical-symbolic interpretation," and the third when it comes down to hard tacks. Earle maintains that the book of Genesis is partially mythical and symbolic, which is an enormous concession to the evolutionists. After all, if it is partially mythical and partially symbolic, how do we know when the literal aspect begins and the non-literal ends? Instead, we should assume non-poetic documents in the Bible are literal, until by a figure of speech they show in some aspect they aren't. Gen. 1, notwithstanding all the attempts by the world's theologians to take and make the days of Gen. 1 more than 24 hours each, reads like straightforward history like I Kings, and not at all like Psalms" or Proverbs" poetry. Indeed, an examination of the rest of Genesis definitely puts it in the historical category in how it is narrated, including the Deluge and the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. To say Genesis 1-2, like Psalms, wasn't mainly to be taken literally like historical accounts are, ignores how the rest of the book is decidedly non-poetic in nature. Furthermore, Pasadena fails to refute the standard fundamentalist arguments that the days of Gen. 1 are literal in anything I've seen that has been published, but just asserts they need not be taken literally, leaning on the questionable arguments of the world's theologians and scholars for support.

First, before proceeding to the text of the Old Testament directly, we should define the word "literal," since it gets such a bad and undeserved rap in this context. For people ridicule the "literal" interpretation of Genesis, forgetting that the word "literal" refers to the normal, everyday meaning we give words.

95 As cited in Henry M. Morris and Gary E. Parker, What Is Creation Science (El Cajon, Calif.: Master Books, 1987), p. 4.

96 John Halford, 'sabbath: the days and nights of Genesis," WWN, February 1, 1994, p. 4.

97 Neil Earle, "The "Monkey Trial" Retried," Plain Truth, July 1995, p. 13.

“Interpretation,” as such, at least before the rise of post-modernism, normally would refer to taking words differently than they normally meant. When the newspaper says, “Dog Bites Man,” the normal, i.e. literal, meaning is that, yes indeed, Rover did put his mouth on some bodily part of Smith and sink his teeth into it. To be literal means when you say the cat is on the mat, yes, indeed, some feline does sit on some rug. Whitcomb calls the “literal” system of biblical interpretation the “indispensable and time-honored historical/grammatical system of biblical interpretation” in one of his works.⁹⁸ According to The American Heritage Dictionary, “literal” means “Being in accordance with, conforming to, or upholding the exact or primary meaning of a word or words . . . Avoiding exaggeration, metaphor, or embellishment; factual; prosaic.” The fundamentalist understanding of Gen. 1-2 is that we should take these early chapters in a straightforward manner, since they aren’t full of metaphors or other poetic conventions that characterize forms of language that aren’t intended to be taken literally. Unlike the case where, say, Isaiah mentions the trees clapping their hands, there isn’t much in the way of obvious metaphors in these early chapters of Genesis. Indeed, a straightforward narrative style is maintained basically throughout the book as it marches through the early history of the human race in general chronological order. There exists no serious differences in style in how Gen. 1-11 is narrated, and how the rest of the book describes Abraham and his descendants’ lives. The burden of proof really is strongly on those who wish to deny Genesis 1-2 is history, which means it should be taken normally literally except for obvious metaphors (such as, in Homer’s Odyssey, “the rosy fingered dawn”). It isn’t in the genre of poetry, like most of Job and the Psalms, where non-literal meanings may be safely assumed to abound.

Let’s consider some standard fundamentalist arguments that the text of Gen. 1-2 should be taken literally.⁹⁹ The days are implied to be literal because it is repeated some six times statements such as this (Gen. 1:13): “And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.” If each day is said to have a “morning” and an “evening,” this by itself virtually proves they are literal 24 hour days each. Then, one finds the days of Gen. 1-2 are referred to with ordinal numbers, such as second, third, fourth, fifth, etc., with the seventh day, the Sabbath day, the end of a week. Out of over 200 instances in which an ordinal or limiting number is applied to the word “day” in the Old Testament, the literal meaning is intended. The Hebrew word for day, “yom,” (plural, “yamin”) approximately 95% of the time it occurs (out of some 2000 occurrences), the literal meaning is intended. For if Moses really meant (say) a billion years elapsed for each day, it would have been much more sensible to use such a word as “olam,” which means “forever” or “time indefinite.” Or, Moses could have

98 John C. Whitcomb, The Early Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Creationism Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 28. This book does a good job of dispatching various scholarly objections to taking the Genesis account of creation literally.

99 See Henry M. Morris, ed., Scientific Creationism (El Cajon, Calif.: Master Books, 1974), pp. 221-230.

used such a combination as “yom rab” (a long day (time)), but he didn’t.

Furthermore, consider the wording of the fourth commandment in Ex. 20:9-10, 11. Here we find the “creation week” directly compared to the literal weekly work and rest cycle, with the implication that the days in the former are as literal as those in the latter: ‘six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.’ The Sabbath command loses a lot of its symbolic meaning if instead the day God rested in Gen. 2:1-3 was some randomly chosen time period in length, rather than a literal 24 hour day. “It is quite clear that the six work days of God are identical in duration with the six days of man’s work week. The basis for this very precise commandment is trivial and vacuous otherwise.”¹⁰⁰ Further, the plural “yammin” is used in the Sabbath command to refer to all the days of Gen. 1 together. And this fact destroys the “day-age” interpretation, for “yammin” is used over 700 times in the Old Testament and it’s never found in a case in which it can be proven to mean anything other than literal days. For if the seventh day in Gen. 2 was literal in length, so will be all the others in the “creation week.”

Consider HWA’s standard approach to Biblical exegesis: “The Bible interprets itself.” Let’s look at how Gen. 1:5 describes a “day” for us: “And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.” Here we find “light” equated with daytime, and “darkness” with nighttime, and the two together make up “one day” (NASB). Similarly, note Gen. 1:14, 16, 19: “Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons (such as the Holy Days), and for days and years . . . And God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night . . . And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.” Can you honestly say the meaning of a “day” changed from 12 or 24 hours each between verses 14 and 16 to a billion years each in verse 19” And this is especially absurd when the latter verse says, “And there was evening and there was morning”! Maybe the “evening” and the “morning” were 500 million years each! It’s illegitimate to read back II Peter 3:8’s statement that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” when the immediate context is what should be used to determine Gen. 1’s meaning. Further, as Whitcomb observes: “To say “as a thousand years” is a very different matter from saying “is a thousand years.” This point has often been overlooked. If “one day” in this verse really means a long period time, then we would end up with the following absurdity . . . “with the Lord a long period of time is as a thousand years.” But a thousand years would be a long period of time for human

100 Ibid., p. 225.

beings too!”¹⁰¹ Furthermore, citing an obvious metaphorical statement about God’s eternity relative to man’s shortness of life to interpret the word “day” in a straightforward historical account of creation (Gen. 1-2) is highly suspect.

One common objection to the literal interpretation of Gen. 1-2 is to cite the use of the word “day” in Gen. 2:4: “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.” Then it will be said the word “day” here had to mean a time period over 24 hours in length since the period of creation took six days. However, there is a powerful refutation of this argument that involves comparing how the word “day” is used in Numbers 7 by Moses to how it was used by him in Gen. 1-2. Here Moses was over a period of several days allowing various individuals of the nation of Israel to dedicate the altar of the tent of meeting. Hence, we see Nahshon the son of Amminadab give such an offering on the first day (v. 12), then on the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar gave an offering (v. 18), and so forth (verses 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78), one for each tribe. Then comes Numbers 7:84, which is a nearly exact parallel to Gen. 2:4 here in its use of the word for “day”: “This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel when [literally, “in the day that,” NASB] it was anointed: twelve silver dishes, twelve silver bowls . . .” As Williams observed:

There appears to be no more justification for the idea that the word in Genesis 2:4 is used par[a]bolically than in Numbers 7:84. In both instances we have first a record of details which occurred in “days” of 24 hours’ duration, and then we have the same word used comprehensively of what has been previously set forth in detail. Such a use of the word “day” is not peculiar to the Hebrews; we use the word similarly today without confusion. A biographer of Lincoln may state the day of his birth and the day of his marriage, the day of his inauguration and the day of his death, etc., and then when summing up the details of his life may say, “now in Lincoln’s day there were no automobiles, radios, or television.” No one would think such a biographer was using the word “parabolically.” Rather, he would be using it comprehensively. And this is exactly what we find in Genesis 2:4. After the writer has informed us as to what transpired on each of the six days, he sums up God’s creative acts by saying, “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”¹⁰²

101 Whitcomb, The Early Earth, p. 32.

102 Arthur F. Williams, “The Genesis Account of Creation,” in Walter E. Lammerts, ed., Why Not Creation? Selected Articles from the Creation Research Society Quarterly Volumes I through V (1964-68) (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), p. 32.

Hence, citing Gen. 2:4's use of the word "day" won't magically turn the days of Gen. 1 into millions of years each.

Fundamentally, the main reason why people don't want to say the days of Gen. 1 are literal is because of the desire to make its account of origins compatible with the geological column and the radioactive decay dating methods. However, we should let the Bible interpret itself, not scientific "knowledge" based upon questionable assumptions and unproven postulates, such as the circular reasoning built into "proving" evolution based upon the geological strata's order of fossils when the order and geographical correlation of the layers of rock is mostly determined by how the theory of evolution arranges the fossils! The dating methods don't just assume the rate of radioactive decay was constant, which is a generally but not always solid assumption. (But on this point, see what results have been reported for the RATE project of the Institution for Creation Research). More questionably, they assume that no leaching of parent or daughter elements away from their original locations occurred, and that they couldn't have been created in some more recent time period in an intermediate decay ratio between the parent-daughter elements between no decay and complete decay, and so decay from that intermediate ratio to what scientists find today. Finally, if God is almighty, isn't it possible that God could create the whole universe, rocks, plants, animals, stars, and all, in a split second? Why do we find it so impossible He did it in seven days, other than to make it easier for us created beings to understand and relate to the idea of creation better (such as through the institution of the Sabbath day)"

We have documented above that the Worldwide Church of God significantly departed from the fundamentalist viewpoint on creation, and has largely repudiated Herbert W. Armstrong's anti-fideist views on Christian apologetics. The views Pasadena presently advocates are not tenable from a scholarly point of view, despite they are popular with various pragmatic evangelicals and mainline Protestants. While we in the United Church of God in recent months have been preoccupied with the issues of the law and the Sabbath, church government, and (secondarily) the nature of God, the fact remains that Pasadena's slide into fideism and a non-literal view of Genesis constitutes errors of equal magnitude in their implications. For if we don't know how it all began, it's impossible to know how it will all end. Such views make it significantly harder to convert people in the world who have a skeptical, pro-evolution mindset, and who ridicule fundamentalism and belief in the Bible. It's time for us in the United Church of God to pick up again on Herbert W. Armstrong's (and Thomas Aquinas') use of human reason to serve the cause of spreading the gospel. If we wish to reach the WORLD, and not just various people who already have a Christian mindset, we should put refutations of evolution and agnosticism up front in our message to the world, as the WCG did before c. 1980. We've long lacked a (presently) available booklet in the WCG that refuted evolution, so we in the UCG should bend to have one of these written, as well as one proving God to exist and another that proves the historicity of the Bible. For if you don't believe in God or the Bible, discussions about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the law of God, the Trinity, etc. are totally irrelevant to begin with. For in order to fulfill I Pet. 3:15, we shouldn't just be ready for attacks on the

law, the Sabbath, God as a Family, or voting for a Council of Elders, but for those motivated by atheism and evolution: “Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you . . .”